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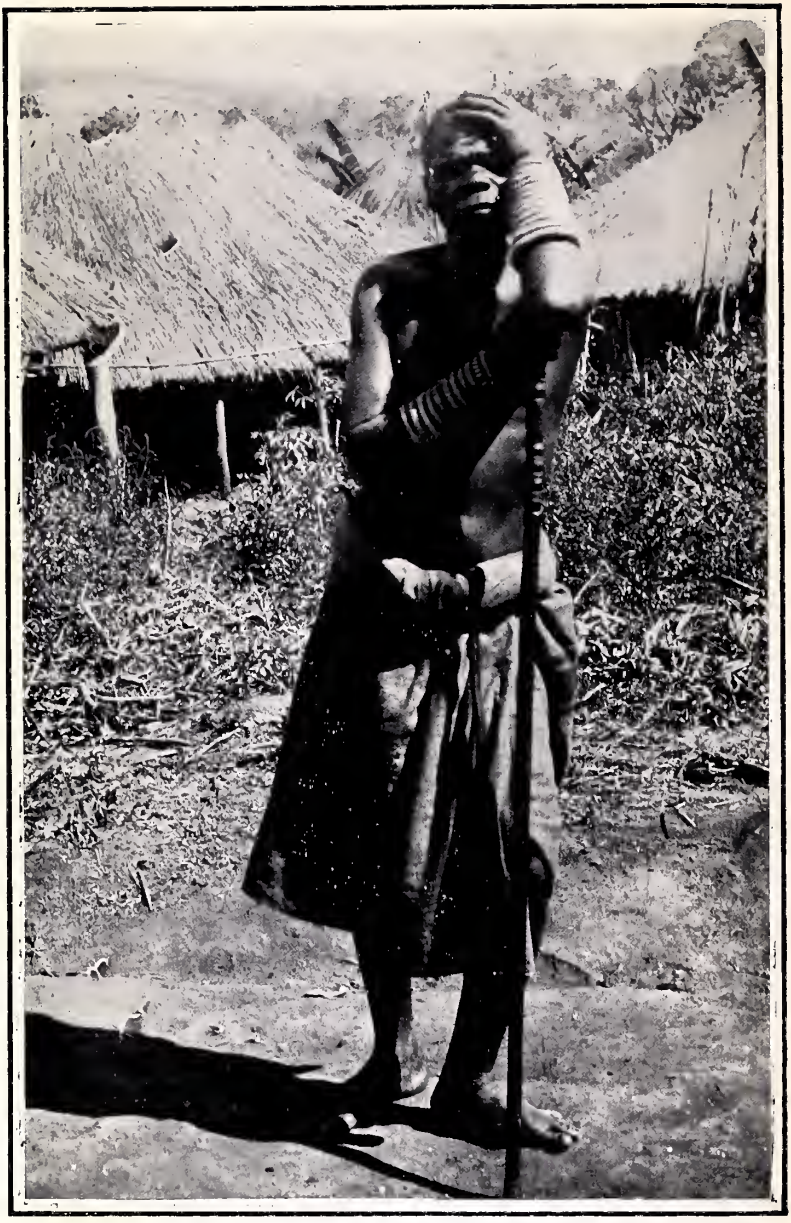

THE BEAU OF THE DISTRICT.

This gentleman's assumption of superiority—self-posed and self-opinionated—is, in his estimation, justified by the possession of a blanket which raises him above the naked condition of his neighbours, and of armlets which, locally, stand for "blood" or caste.

WILD BUSH TRIBES
OF
TROPICAL AFRICA

AN ACCOUNT OF ADVENTURE & TRAVEL AMONGST PAGAN PEOPLE IN TROPICAL AFRICA, WITH A DESCRIPTION OF THEIR MANNERS OF LIFE, CUSTOMS, HEATHENISH RITES & CEREMONIES, SECRET SOCIETIES, SPORT & WARFARE COLLECTED DURING A SOJOURN OF TWELVE YEARS

BY
G. CYRIL CLARIDGE

WITH 41 ILLUSTRATIONS & A MAP

LONDON
SEELEY, SERVICE & CO. LIMITED
38 GREAT RUSSELL STREET
1922

TO MY BEST FRIEND

COLLEAGUE, COMPANION, AND CHUM

MY WIFE

THIS BOOK IS AFFECTIONATELY DEDICATED

IN MEMORY OF OUR TRAVELS TOGETHER

AND OUR JOINT LABOURS

AMONG THE AFRICANS

PREFACE

THIS book deals with the wild, primitive bush people of West Central Africa. It makes no pretension to speak for any other part of Africa. With the ancient capital of San Salvador as centre, it treats of the Ba-Congo of Northern Angola, bounded on the north by the Congo, on the east by the Kwilu and Kwangu Rivers, down as far as S. Paul de Loanda, with the Atlantic on the west.

The subject of fetishism dealt with in this book is official. The information is at first hand, and is what we have seen or investigated with the aid of experts, priests, and participants.

For the first time the great secrets of the Nkamba fetish system are laid bare. It is the province of native women from which the men are rigorously excluded.

The book also shows *from the inside* the chief secret society, that of the Death and Resurrection.

A careful investigation of the origin, purport, and phraseology of Congo folklore has furnished us with valuable material on the ethics and the religion of the people. Where a literal translation of the idiom would produce unintelligible English, we have given the central thought. Here and there a predicate has to be inserted, or some word to complete the ellipsis so common in such national lore, but where there is always enough phrasing to give the clue to its meaning the original form has been retained.

We have preferred, in the majority of cases, the word " priest " instead of " doctor " to express the native word

" nganga," simply because it is more correct to do so. The word " doctor " in Kisi-Kongo is " ngang' a wuka." Nganga is simply " wise-one " or expert. His sphere being especially that of priestcraft he is, in the strictest sense of the term, a priest. He is first and foremost a religious functionary.

The native word *ndoki* means either witch or wizard. In the original it is both masculine and feminine. We therefore preserve the Congo mode of thought in speaking of a man as a " witch."

We have also preserved a good deal of native phraseology.

The illustrations are comprehensive, showing African life from East to West.

The book is the outgrowth of twelve years' intimacy with the life and language of the people it describes, and of a very close study, on the spot, of the questions with which it deals.

G. C. C.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Our sincere thanks are due to the Revs. J. H. Marker, F. Beale, A. A. Lambourne, and E. Boyce for the photographs.

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To all the natives, men and women, who have given much aid in our studies and investigations of the matters dealt with.

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Wild Bush Tribes of Tropical Africa

CHAPTER I

From Continent to Continent

THE contemplation of Africa is overwhelming. Its geographical immensity, its linguistic compass, its vast wealth, its peoples, its animals, its dramas, its comedies and tragedies, are things to conjure with.

The fact that the whole of Europe, Australia, India, and China almost can be accommodated within its boundaries, is staggering to the mind of a little Islander.

Though second in the category of continents, it is first on the globe in attractiveness.

Who has not, in imagination, crossed its deserts, plunged into its forests, trapped game in its jungles, and shot reptiles in its mighty rivers? Who has not fancied its plains, smelt its swamps, pictured its peoples, conceived its precious minerals, apprehended its natural beauties, explored its animal life, its aviaries, and its natural aquaria?

Africa is the lodestar of every romantic mind. With its Ethiopian princes in the north, its pygmies in the centre, its Bantu warriors in the south, and its quaint, mixed populace scattered all over its surface, Africa is a name with a peculiar polarity.

What studies in contrasts! What contrasts! Contrasts in races, from the Hamites at the one end, to the Hottentots at the other; in habits, from the etiquette of a Pharaoh, to the conventional decorum of a Cetewayo; in architecture, from a Ptolemaic temple in Egypt, to a rude hut of straw and mud in Angola; in cities, from an ancient Carthage to a modern Luebo; in religions, from the mythologies of the Copts to the fetishism of the Kaffres; in monuments, from the pyramids on the borders of the Libyan deserts to the fetish shrines of equatorial villages; in dress, from the flowing robes of a Semite to the palm strands round the loins of a Congolese; in music, from the lyre of the ancients to the fiddlephone of the Swazi; in language, from the eloquence of the Egyptians to the jargon of the Bula Matadi; in art, from the glass and pottery of Thothmes III to the crude mechanical crafts of the Bobangi; in climate, from the healthy regions of the Cape to the treacherous swamps of the Congo. What mind is not enchanted with such dreams?

The history of Africa also has a weird fascination for the student, especially for the mind of one who hopes to set foot on its soil.

Its stories alternately send one into ecstasies and despair. We are thrilled by the thought of the land before we see it. What tragedies and triumphs, scandal and science, vice and victories, slavery and salvation, murder and merit, lie between the explorations of Necho and Livingstone.

Of its wars, it has given us Khartoum and Omdurman of the Soudanese; Ulundi of the Zulus; Bulawayo of the Matabeles; and Pretoria of the Transvaal. Of its champions it has immortalized the names of Gordon the soldier, Wilberforce the philanthropist, Laws the physician, Gordon Cumming the hunter, Moffat the missionary, Speke the explorer, Drummond the scientist, and many

other worthies of notable fame. Out of its troubles "rise, like exhalations, the misty phantoms of" Don Manuel I Portvg. Rex III, with his ships of human freight; Leopold II with a rubber bag of gold in his grip; Mohammed Ahmed, the "Mahdi," wearing the helmet of General Gordon; with a host of others, foreign and native, who have left bloodstains at Windhoek, San Thomé, and on the banks of the Nile, the Niger, and the Zambesi.

With such an accumulation of diversities, small wonder that the continent of Africa acts upon the mind which dwells upon it, as the magnetic pole attracts the needle of a compass.

What thrills there are in the first glimpse of the shores of the "dark continent." Palm trees isolated and in clusters—majestic, stolid, long stemmed, wavy limbed—stand up like sentinels along the Senegal coast-line. Where they appear in clumps the sight is more imposing. The shore, flecked here and there with the white foam of the sea as it breaks upon the golden beach, spraying the rocks with its crystal drops, is a view entrancing. In the light of its tropical sun the land is bewitchingly gorgeous. Birds fly out to the ship and back to the coast as though carrying messages of welcome to our craft. It is the glittering strand which makes the names of Clapperton, Laing, Stewart, Hannington, and as many of their noble host of colleagues from B.C. Pharaoh to Arnot A.D., that one has read of, vivid in the memory. In it you see the land of the sun—and the land of darkness.

In every port there is hubbub. In an African port there is more hubbub. Here you see people with souls and bodies as black as the coal they fling into the bunkers, and almost as hard, so it seems.

The most miserable place in a port is on the vessel coaling. All the portholes are shut, which means an atmosphere almost murderous. It is quasi suicidal to stay

in it. Outside is a din and dust, enough to drive one mad.

At Dacca you see the stately Arab bowing to Allah ; and as you walk through bazaars, unless you are initiated into the secret, you get loaded up with a lot of goods you surmise to be native, but which, much to your chagrin, you discover were manufactured in Paris, Birmingham, and Bombay.

The Gulf of Guinea, like a sea of glass, stretches out on all sides to where the heavens seem to meet it. To sail across it when all is serene above and below is a most glorious excursion. Topees, drills, pumps, cummerbunds, and the rest, are in general evidence. The heat is terrific. The sun is magnificent. Scarcely a ripple is seen on the water for days together. At night the moonlight hangs like a silver mantle in the shimmering sea. As the ship's bows plough the deep they cleave a lane of phosphorescent beauty.

Soon we are on the look out for the Congo waters. Defective navigation, however, took us too far north. Our vessel steamed up off the coast of Cabinda. Then we headed for Cape Lopez. Evidently the officers were lost. Finally they righted the error and, after much delay, we came into the estuary of the mighty river.

Such a maritime blunder is rare. As a rule these officers are marvels of nautical science and skill. We have seen them pilot their boat into the inner harbour of Cherbourg when visibility has not been half a ship's length.

The view at the entrance to the Congo River is not so impressive as imagination pictures it. The land is low-lying and flat, with a few unpretentious-looking buildings peeping out from bunches of trees. It looks as though one good wave would swamp Banana, for it stands on a plot of land like a forefinger, with a wide stretch of water between it and the thumb—the mainland.

Inside the Banana bight we went aground, an event specially remembered on account of the peculiar nausea we experienced when the ship struck the sandbank.

The Congo is a mighty torrent, especially at its mouth. It is flanked on either side by deep lagoons, reeded swamps, vast stretches of marsh and morass, which breed 90 per cent of the dangers and diseases of the riverine peoples. Narrow channels connect vast sea-like lakes which divide off in all directions like so many independent rivers, encompassing islands large and small, in their extensive ramifications, to meet again further on in another strait of deep water. The ship's course up-river is exactly serpentine, not only because the watercourse is tortuous, but because, in places, it throws up dangerous rocks, heaps up treacherous sandbanks, and holds perilous islands in the middle of the stream.

At times the boat comes near enough the bank for one to jump off. Here and there the bank is level with the promenade deck, or again, level with the boat-deck, then even lower than the dining-saloon, extending in long stretches N. S. and E. with very little variation. The plains are studded with lonchocapous, baobao, palms, plants, shrubs, and innumerable llianas. Various wild animals are to be seen calmly browsing, until, startled by the noise of the screw, or the column of smoke, they start up, regard us for some time with concentrated attention, then turn round and disappear like a flash into the bush.

Presently the hills lend greater charm to the vista. It is also a sign that the port of Boma is not far distant.

The necessity for the 'ville boats to cast anchor in mid-stream, off Fetish Rock, to unload part of the cargo, in order to get over a dangerous bed, gives time to muse on the attack by the natives upon the fort in Portuguese territory to starboard, when Buta's warriors burnt them out of defence and home in 1914; of which more anon.

Boma is the seat of the Belgian Congo Government. The Governor's yacht lies along the quay, spick-and-span in colour, like any other toy. His park is a veritable botanic garden. The padres here conduct Mass in state and promenade in the same mien. Natty little soldiers pop about with noiseless tread. One wonders whether it was not to Boma that the manufacturer came for his model of the tin regiment we used to play with in the nursery. The Boma military are just like the box of soldiers we had: small, trim, dark, active fellows, with neat tarboosh and fez, small blue smocks and knickers with red bands, buckled at the knee, and short swords hanging from straps round their middle.

One soon tires of Boma and begins to look towards Matadi, further up the river.

Noki is a very small port quite unworthy of the huge realm which lies behind it. That this is the only place the Portuguese have to put out northwards all the stuff which might be disgorged from that vast region—the Congo district of Angola—is an eloquent tribute to the commercial inertia of the foreigner first on the river. It is typically Portuguese: whitewash, bluewash, redwash, and other wash are its distinguishing features. Houses with church doorways and church doors, shops with no windows in them, and stores without back or front, inhabited by Europeans, for the most part in pyjamas and alpergatas (rope-soled shoes), give an impression that everything here has run to seed.

When coming from Noki the ship heads straight for the face of a mighty rock which seems to end the river in a sort of blind alley. It is just at the foot of this rock that the volume of water, coming with tremendous velocity, is sent in a fearful whirl, like the contents of a pot violently stirred with a spoon, from which it takes its name, only, to give spice to its fury, they call it "the devil's pot."

In a very short time we were sailing up to the wharf at Matadi: the biggest, hottest, busiest, most cosmopolitan and odoriferous dumping terminus for the wealth of at least 900,000 square miles, and of anything from 9,000,000 to 40,000,000 people.

When we stepped on to the quay at Matadi we finished the first stage of our journey.

CHAPTER II

Two Thousand Miles into the Heart of Africa

MATADI is the place where travellers get into the vast territory of Congo Belge as if through the neck of a bottle; a geographical constriction which sometimes chokes the river with boats, the quays with traffic, the hotels with foreigners, and the streets with babbling natives.

Matadi means rocks or stones, a name which accurately describes what the place really is—a natural rockery. They jut out and underrun in all sorts of unexpected places. Inland, they stand up as mountains, a good day's journey over the top. They push out into the river, forming an effective block to navigation for 130 miles. It is indeed "a port of stones."

The riverscape is charming. It is a magnificent flow between deep declivities which re-echo the music of twelve thousand miles of waterway. It gurgles down, chipping off melodies from the rocks it lashes, and swishing out symphony from its whirlpools and eddies. It is bordered at intervals with sandspits on which crocodiles sprawl, taking their sunbath. There are rocks, too, to which these reptiles cling like limpets, against which, when the beasts have been too sharp for the marksman, the bullets ping and ricochet.

To hear the splash of the Congo waters in the dead of night, or the perpetual ripple of the wavelets falling over each other out in deep murmur, brings a thrill rarely experienced.

The innate fortitude of the Ba-Congo native is exemplified at this port in the story of a youth taking a header into the river for a swim, when he struck a broken bottle on the bottom, tearing a fearful wound in his stomach which let the bowels escape. Coming up from the water he calmly gathered his entrails together, held them in position with his cloth, and made his way several hundred yards up the beach to the doctor's house, where he made a good recovery.

We stayed no longer than needful in Matadi. Its heat impedes locomotion by day and banishes repose by night. The climbing it necessitates is not appreciated by pedestrians in the tropics, whilst its miasmata make one long for the uplands. Noise is another disquieting factor. The buzz of natives who cannot work without clamour is incessant, as also the songs of boatmen who row and drone to a rhythm tattooed on the prow of canoes with anything that makes a din.

There is, too, a type of native whose contact with Europe has left a stain upon him. There is also a colony of heathens which civilization has turned into a colony of harlots. They have a professional argot understood by both black and white.

We were painfully reminded that the Congo exacts its toll from our own race when a fellow-countryman was dragged up out of its waters a corpse.

Congoland is a succession of disillusionments. We scarcely think it conforms in any way to what the average European presupposes it to be. The simple, unpretentious life of the heathen is not seen in its ports. There is a hybrid sort of life more squalid than that of pure heathendom. In the hinterland there are Europeans imagined to be living in primitive style, in bush, jungle, or forest, or absorbed in the life of some fierce tribe, or fiercer haunts, but who are in fact comfortably domiciled, with more than

a smack of luxury. The "romance of the wilds," which puts a beast in every thicket, a snake in every den, and an exciting contingency in every circumstance, is not so romantic when you realize that only to the few is any chance of knight-errantry ever likely to come in Africa.

The sun you thought would be a friend is more often an enemy, striking with an alarming velocity every nerve and fibre of the body. Where you look for verdant green you often see a parched landscape, a burnt-out valley, or a charred panorama. There are hills topped with mists and dales filled with fogs, of comparative cold, necessitating blankets and tweeds to keep it outside the body.

The Congo railway is a remarkable piece of engineering skill. For 231 kilometres it climbs and twists like an enormous serpent through the most exquisite scenery. At first, rocks stand up almost perpendicularly many feet above the line, on which little engines no bigger than "pugs," scream up and down with a maximum of fuss and vapour.

They pull fine saloon cars for the dons, simple carriages for the next white grade, and open-side trucks with hard seats for all and sundry. You ride in the first for comfort, the second for shelter, the third for experience and excitement.

Rock-facings on one side, deep gorges on the other, give us glimpses of the whims and embroideries of nature. Presently we come upon the most charming vistas. Away over picturesque valleys, mountains ascend in galleries beautiful in symmetry and shape, until lost in the rolling white clouds. Streams great and small dissect the lowlands, like silver threads interlacing gardens, glens, and forests. Eland, hartebeest, buck, and other fleet game may be seen darting across the metals whilst from the higher platforms may be viewed an occasional herd of buffaloes or elephants making off into distant retreats.

What tragedies are hidden in these landscapes. Along the pathway curling among the hills tramped the slave caravan of the past. On the kopjes to the East and North, the evening fires tell of sacrifices to the gods. Away to the South stands Demon Hill, where the victims of religious delusions were led bound and thrown down several thousand feet. If you look well you will see the face of the precipice over which they fell, to be broken far below. In the forests which lie between us and the hills on the skyline, all the horrors of African secret societies have been enacted. Not a village site comes into view but which, had it a tongue to speak, would tell of some hellish rite, cannibal feast, heathen crime, bloody fight, or cruel raid. There is the river on the banks of which Ngwana was spiked like an ox on a spit. Further away, in the same direction, is seen the knot of palms under which the Bangu people always murdered their witches and burnt their bodies to fire ash.

On the right live the descendants of the negro Adam who, through selfishness and disobedience, brought toil, nakedness, poverty and death to the miserable Bantu. He was led into the heart of the forest by a happy peri who showed him the end of a beautiful cloth sticking out of the ground under a stone, guarded by a serpent. He was told that he could help himself to the cloth by pulling as much of it out of the earth as he liked, but that in no case must he sever it. The cloth, however, proved longer than his patience. He cut it, whereupon it vanished as if by magic. Since then the Congo negro has had no Eden, and incidentally, no cloth, for the gods have never from that day tried to clothe the African decently. Such is part of the third chapter of the Congo heathen's "Book of Genesis."

Travelling third class up the Congo railway is an education. Negroes usually carry with them all their worldly possessions. Thus you may find yourself seated

next a fowl-coop, a billy-goat, an awful dog, or a small store of things of greater pungency than value. When one negro begins to eat they all begin to eat, and then things are more pungent still. The stiff, clammy roll called *bala*, and its accomplice *bacalhau*, which is a sort of shark made stiff and tasty with smoke and salt, give off the most offensive smell we have ever sampled.

There is also trouble from the engine, which coughs out blazing ashes like a volcano. Our blanket fastened along the front and side of the truck kept them off our person, but at the cost of the blanket, as the red-hot shot thoroughly riddled it.

The range of acquaintance among the Congolese seems wide, for nearly everyone on the train appeared to know nearly everyone on the track, judging by the way they shouted greetings and waved fellowship to each other along the route.

They are merry travellers. There is a smile or a laugh on each face which seems to be a permanent endowment. The negro is never far off from the mirthful.

Along the side of the line stretches a length of iron oil-pipe, outstripping the cataracts at each end.

About the railway gathers a motley horde of natives, male and female, who are not improved by the association. They cultivate the peculiar excesses in habit and dress, which sadly belie their simple clansmen in the bush, who have not been debased by the touch of Europe.

There is also a body of educated natives commanding responsible positions, a proof of the faithful work of those valuable pioneers who toiled and still toil, solely from a deep-seated affection for the race, and for the Master of the race. Mohammedans, however, are rapidly ousting even these from their gains, in their steady locust-like trek from the North, which has long characterized the Moslem movement in Africa.

As we steam along, the scene changes like a kinematographic picture. Now there is something heathen, then there is something modern; a European college on the left, a native circumcision lodge on the right; a hut of wattle and daub by the side of a brick church; a batch of civil servants alongside a caravan of savages. There is the trading shanty, where a negro youth, smarting under a sense of oppression, stole into the white man's room and shot him at close range, where also the law shot the youth in the same way as a warning to his fellows.

Thysville is to Congo what Crewe is to the L. & N.W.R. It is also a "seat of customs" where 70,000 people pay in their taxes. Electricity here defies the African night. It is a bleak plateau in the mornings when it is 2,400 feet up in a fog cloud as dense as some we have seen in Piccadilly. At midday it is as high up in a shimmering furnace. At 5.30 a.m. the teeth chatter; at noon one is mopping sweat from the forehead with a towel. The people in this region have known what it is to eat grass, when famine has driven them to it.

After two days we came to the upper river, where stands Kinshassa, the coming capital of the colony, and where about 300 Europeans control from 12,000 to 13,000 natives.

Cannibalism dies a hard death. Its taste is not easily overcome. Even in this commercial hub, a man from the upper reaches of the Congo lured his fellows to a secret haunt and killed them, afterwards cutting up the flesh and selling it on the open market. A quarrel with his wife was the cause of his betrayal, and he paid the penalty.

Stanley Pool is not only a fine pool of water, but a fine pool of people. They come down from the same vast watershed which supplies the lake with water. Its banks are the Ethiopian Mecca. It is the metropolis of the Congo peoples as it is the loch of the Congo waters.

From the French side of this great natural reservoir there is a magnificent view of the cataracts where the waters begin their long, precipitous fall to the lower Congo, in a roaring, spuming, ceaseless torrent.

Within the next fortnight we covered 1000 miles of the main river in a small, flat-bottomed stern-wheeler, in which we threaded our way slowly at the rate of 71½ miles a day.

We had now entered the realm of wild romance in which the heart of every boy delights.

The tumid coffee-coloured water rushes south-west at a great pace, right through the land of mystery, melancholy, darkness, and depression, pushing its myriad fingers into the gigantic roots on the banks and feeding dense, dark mangrove swamps which intrude themselves upon their majesty.

Where the river goes off into creeks, families of hippopotami float about with their calves on their backs, sending wave-ring after wave-ring to the beach as they bob about the surface like huge balks of timber. For several days we passed monster crocodiles, the like of which we had never seen, swarming on almost every mud-bank in the river. Some lay motionless, like queer, immovable structures. Others moved leisurely into the water and swam about in droves, churning the waters into seething foam. Sometimes when the boat's course came near the bank, these reptiles would flop into the river like a giant landslide. Overhead, in the tree-tops, legions of monkeys came out, chattered, and dashed off again in wild agitation. Away in the lagoons, we could see the stork, the spoonbill, and many other attractive creatures paddling in the shallows for worms and other dainties.

Day after day we steered our way cautiously between the rocks and sandbanks of the glittering river, measuring its depths at every revolution of the paddle to keep us in

the deep. Every day the sun was furious, but every hour was full of new interest and admiration.

At night we tied up to the shore when the firewood for the next day was cut in the forest and stacked aboard. The negroes lighted camp fires on the beach where they cooked their food, ate it, and then slept until 4.30 o'clock next morning. Goats were shipped for the white man's larder, which destiny they invariably precipitated by keeping up a ceaseless stamping, bleating, and snorting just below the passenger deck. The din was always present, whether we had goats or not, for below, natives of many tribes and tongues buzzed about their baggage like bees round a honey-pot. The distraction, at times, made one wonder whether some larder could not be found to accommodate them, poor souls.

Night on board, moored to the bank, was an eventful time. Mosquitoes came in at the portholes and hummed like a buzz-saw. Frequently we could not sleep for the droning. Sometimes the "wooding" went on far into the night, and every log was thrown down on the metal deck making it shiver and boom like a drum. Weird noises ashore disturbed the night afloat. Every sound was magnified. Owls hooted, hippos snorted, leopards called, night birds croaked, and the echoes were clear and ghostly.

When the sun was well up we took our morning tub under the spray of the paddles' wash in the rear of the boat: a most exhilarating bath.

Whenever we passed a town, boys plunged into the river, swam out to the wash of the wheels, where they enjoyed the tumbling commotion of the waters until the agitation ceased.

In places, the mighty waterway divides off in many directions, giving the appearance of so many independent giant streams. Sometimes the main course is the narrowest, when we can contemplate the immensity and beauty of

the forests on the banks. But what gloom! The density of them is almost impenetrable. Away in there we know that human mortals went for rubber, for which they paid their liberty, their limbs, and their lives.

A huge snake swam gracefully across with its head held proudly out of the water. A troop of elephants crossed a backwater in the same way, with trunks aloft, but with less grace.

In the evening we searched the villages for things of wonder and interest. Nor did we ever fail to find them. We saw how the African acquires his skill in archery before he takes up the chase or war in earnest. A score of boys lined up on the roadway with bows and arrows already strung. At one end stood a youth with a large soft fruit or berry in his hand. This he bowled as fast as he could to another boy, who stood at the other end to receive it. As the ball sped past at a great pace, each boy shot an arrow at it, and so good was the marksmanship that when picked up, the berry was pierced with many arrow wounds. They throw spears in the same style until they gain sufficient confidence to venture at real game, animal or human.

We saw the result of the more serious application of this art just south of the Choppa Falls, where one of the Bamanga severed the muscles of the thigh and the forearm of a Lokele woman with his spear, and then drove a hatchet through her ribs and heart. It was Sunday morning, and created such a stir, that when her tribe saw her body they were for war at once. A bloody scene would have followed but for the wise and friendly intervention of a European who certainly saved them from a calamity.

On the opposite shore, some two years before, they had killed, cooked, and eaten a solitary stranger who had sauntered into the village. It was their last cannibal feast.

A Upoto Chief.

He is wearing a leopard's teeth necklace ; an antelope's skin and horns ; and a protective fighting belt round his waist.

A Fowler's Equipment.

In the absence of a gun this man is provided with a decoy bird and a net for snaring partridges and guinea fowl.

As if to emphasize the grim past and present mysteries of the great river, a corpse floated by our canoe hereabouts, face upwards.

The art of drumming is very highly developed among these people. The skill with which they transmit complicated messages over long distances is a thing to marvel at. The drums are tree-trunk sections hollowed out, with two lips at the top of different thickness for the sake of tone. Messages are tattooed in a sort of Morse code of two distinct musical notes. We received detailed news of the death of a white baby, and other information, two days' journey by steamer from the place where the news originated.

The upper river warriors are of superior physique to those down in the west. They are taller, better developed, with muscles well corded and sinewy, indicative of great strength and suppleness. With spear and shield their gait is stately. Their bearing is imposing. They wear necklaces of panther teeth, caps of reptile skin, aprons of leopard peau, belts of buffalo hide, scabbards of hippo pell, and they carry a mien to match.

One day we sat in a public place when four swarthy champions sat down, two on each side of us, in a proximity that was not pleasant. Their manner was perfectly sedate, no doubt, but not exactly to the taste of one born in civilization. They had come a distance and were oozing sweat copiously. Their hair was set up pyramid fashion, rigid with animal fat of a rancid sort, with a bob of hair and fat lumped up in the nape of the neck for support and effect. As the sun played upon it, it ran down in glistening streamlets and gave off a scent approximating that of a candle factory. But the brave fellows were happy in it, enjoying the sweet confidence of having finished their toilet *à la mode*.

Village life is full of interest and wonderment. Black-

smiths sit under sheds forging their metal. Their hand hammers are ingots of iron they themselves have smelted from the ore. Their sledges are stones shaped to their needs. Their tongs are bark, fibre, or creeper doubled. Their anvils are blocks of rock. Their bellows are of duplicate logs hollowed out like mortars, with a skin over the basin. The two skins are worked rapidly with short sticks alternately, which take in air, forcing it through a common channel into the fire, which burns charcoal.

The houses are low with raised floors and low doorways, through which the people creep.

The farther one travels up the Congo the more scarce becomes native clothing, until, on the Lower Lualaba, it may be the barest thread, or less. Some of the tribes regard it as sheer vanity to clothe their women. The men express surprise and often indignation, when advised to provide their wives and daughters with a covering. We have known these women stop outside a compound, clothe themselves with leaves to approach white people, and throw them away again immediately after the interview. Where is the wrong of indecency but in the minds of those who conceive it? is a question which lets us right into the mind of the black man.

For the last twelve miles to Stanleyville we sat in a dug-out paddled by six Yakusu stalwarts. We got into the canoe at 3 a.m., and arrived at Stanleyville just before nine. From this town we travelled through coffee plantations, farms, jungle, and forest, on a better line and on a better train, at a quicker pace than on the lower railway, though we had to sit in a luggage truck throughout the journey.

At Pontierville we steamed alongside a river of even greater romance than the Congo; the Lualaba. It was on the other side that wave upon wave of slave-raiders came down upon the Manyema, and the Manyema, in turn,

came down, in revenge, upon their neighbours, sometimes in the presence of Dr. Livingstone.

On the same shore we saw the dirtiest, laziest, and most miserable tribe we have ever encountered. Every woman, man, and child was covered with dirt and camwood powder. Their hair was long, fuzzy, and unkempt. They were jiggery-footed and more or less septic, living in dwelling-houses and towns which were worthy allies of insanitation and disease. Their currency consisted of little flint stones, forty or so to the penny, threaded on a string. They had a twopenny-piece in the form of a length of iron with two edges, nearly five feet long and from two to four inches broad. Most of them were naked. Some wore a strip of palm fibre, others a skirt of grass. It was a community which made us wonder whether we had got down to the bed-rock of humanity below which there could not be so much as the legendary ape.

At one depot we shipped a Baron who had lost his fortune in Europe and gone to Africa to retrieve it. He was a rare filibuster, with a glib tongue and a splendid "Enfield": two useful weapons to dig out wealth from African natives.

Swahili-speaking Arabs, children of the old slave traffickers, are numerous on this river. To this day they look capable of reverting to the old hunts, if only the eye and the arm of Law and Christendom were not so intrusive.

One afternoon we came upon a most exciting race between two giant hippos, which, from some motive, swam along the deep, neck and neck, at a tremendous pace, turning up the water like the twinscrew of a liner backing. We preferred to reverse the rifle and watch the beasts breasting into a side-pool.

We then boarded a steamer which was top-heavy. It gave the impression, when pacing the deck, that she listed to the side on which we were walking. At night we were driven out of our bunks by mosquitoes, which made it

impossible to sleep even inside a net, to spend the time until dawn on deck, where other nocturnal pests, but less voracious, made it impossible to muse.

From this we transhipped to a canoe, which was almost too narrow to sit in. It was too bent and warped to ride easy. The bottom was flooded. We could do nothing but squat until, caught in the wash of a passing steamer, we were almost capsized, being violently forced on to the bottom to keep the frail barque from foundering. It was but a mere streak of timber answering to every wag of the head as though it were a rudder. It cured us of a craving to sail strong waters in fragile vessels.

Between the Congo and the Lipori we hunted monkeys to provide a feast for our party. These forests are swarming with simian creatures of innumerable species. They fled to the upper branches of the trees, turned, eyed us with intense curiosity, rearing up on their feet, shaking the branches in fury, and voicing a peculiar guttural sound of indignation and alarm. Many of the old apes are of weird appearance with beard and moustache as though trimmed in a barber's shop. Some of those we caught to make into sandwiches had attractive features from a side view, which irresistibly compelled us to wonder where we had seen them before. One captive rascal entered our window and stole our best fountain pen, as if bent on maintaining the tribal reputation for adventure and roguery.

The love for hunting is in the negro's blood. To see him approach a crocodile on the beach and with a powerful throw send his spear right through the brute's spinal column, is a thrilling sight. In the forest and on the plain he scents spoor like a quadruped and follows up his quarry like a bloodhound.

Our first wild boar was secured by a marksman who seldom missed his game. We hung up the pig after opening

it, intending to quarter it that evening, but before this could be done the driver ants took possession of it, refusing to give it up until burnt out.

On the north bank we found a chimpanzee in a high state of education. It would uprear its great bulk, present its cheeks to be kissed, and then walk arm in arm with its master helping itself along stupidly with the knuckles of the other hand on the ground like a clubbed foot. Some of these creatures are trained, by those who like them, to sit at table, dine, drink wine, use a table napkin, and smoke cigars with appreciation.

We witnessed the wedding ceremony of a Lifoto head man. The festival began at 2 p.m., when the whole coast-line was agog with excitement. By that time palm wine had fuddled the head of every negro. The groom was a huge muscular fellow over six feet. Alcohol shone through his dusky skin, bleared his eyes, made his feet totter and his tongue lisp. His bride was a girl about ten years, maybe less, hardly more. On her loins she wore but a strip of new cloth. For two hours she sat on a seat at the knees of her gallant owner, who sat opposite. For more than two hours they sat writhing and squirming to each other—the most contemptible and foul exhibition ever drummed to in Africa. Older heads urged on the ribald laughter and merriment. Eight tall girls with no more clothing than the bride, sat round performing the same obscenities until the perspiration ran down freely and dropped in large beads to the ground. At a given signal all stood up. A woman rushed to the girl and snatched away the bit of rag she had on her body. She was then set on an old door and hoisted on to the shoulders of six tall men. Eight other warriors bearing spears, carried the eight dancing "bridesmaids" across their shoulders, with a leg over each shoulder. Thus they formed a procession, with the chief leading the van, surrounded by a dancing, leaping,

yelling, drunken mob of heathens. The concluding item of the rite was a tableau in which this giant stood by his naked girl-bride delivering a beery oration.

We turned aside ashamed. That creatures of human blood should sink beneath the level of those of a lower order burned into our conscience.

Next morning we set out for a tribe sunk in the lowest depths of moral and mental degradation, where, for ten years, we saw life as heathens alone live it, and applied aids such as one with the will and the commission can make use of to improve it.

CHAPTER III

The Revolt of the Ba-Congolese

EVEN a worm will turn, though a futile turn, against the foot which tries to crush it. It is what the Congolese did when they believed that foreign adventurers were trying to put a yoke on their neck.

Soon after our arrival rumours of war began to float about. In a short time the whole country was up in arms. The struggle was brief, but it was fierce, and, although swallowed up in the Great War, as big calamities do consume the little ones, it was an indication that there is a limit to human endurance, even among the tribes of Central Africa.

The Ba-Congolese are a comparatively peaceful people to-day, with neither pluck, energy, nor cohesion enough to resist what would send the Zulus or the Azendi into paroxysms of fury. They are accustomed to taking severe castigations at the hands of unscrupulous raiders, being fairly cowed by the depredations of modern engines of war, and other things. Four hundred and thirty years of vassalage have all but blotted out their natural and national spunk. They are the kin and descendants of those who died at San Thomé and Principe, or in chains when on their way there—names which to this day strike terror and paralysis into their souls. The years have left them bitter and revengeful. The sixteenth century burnt itself into the old slaves at the rate of over 10,000 a year; wellnigh 1,050,000 deportations to grind out blood-money for European speculators. With a second sight the natives still see those ships sail out from Pinda, and with a sixth

sense they still scent the graves of their ancestors. History sometimes becomes a hard master. The chief cause of labour shortage in West Africa to-day is attributed to the alarming wastage of life in the slave trafficking of past generations to South America and other places. The old story of discarded shackles, scattered bones, axed skulls, and other gruesome things, strewn over the land, has gone out to every boundary, and far beyond, until the very whisper of "indentured labour" makes a negro see red.

They are legitimately suspicious, and now and again, out of the suspicions comes a national cataclysm. This chapter is the story of one.

The Portuguese, it is said, came to rule the Ba-Congolese by a "ruse." * Don Pedro V, of Lisbon, from whom the famous old King of Kongo took his name and title, sent his negro namesake a chair, an article over which the big royal and jovial protégé would naturally become ecstatic. Even heathen etiquette recognized the propriety of acknowledging such a handsome gift. But the king could neither read nor write. Others wrote for him, and read it to him. They were Portuguese clerics and civilians, not officials. His Majesty simply put his mark to the epistle, but that was enough. When that letter was read to *ēl rei*, it turned out to be an unqualified gift to him of every square mile of Pedro's territory, and of every soul that lived on it. What could European statesmen say to that? It was in black and white, stamped with the erratic scrawl of the sovereign of the ancient kingdom of the West Bantu. So King Luis I took official possession of the land just twelve months before he died, since when the sway of that sceptre in Africa has been one long, languid, eventful maladministration. The tradition lives and ever and anon the smart of it kindles in a blaze.

* *Among the Primitive Ba-Kongo.*

The administration is mainly military. The country is divided into martial areas, each area with its accompanying staff of white officers, subalterns, and soldiery. The latter contains the "degradados"—murderers, criminals, and outlaws expelled from Lusitanian Europe. Then there are the native regiments—pagan warriors who generally license to themselves the liberty of doing what they like with rifle and cold steel. These men are the worst and biggest enemy the black man has. The public is at their mercy. Away in the back bush they are a law unto themselves.

It is a great mistake to suppose that every official is an adventurer, a slave driver, or a vagabond. There are many whose sense of justice, fair play, and honour, is of sterling standard ; functionaries who do credit to their government. They are gentlemen by nature and attainment, commanding the confidence and respect of both superiors and subjects. Such men must be remembered before passing any censure upon a regime which may happen to be victimized by a few who disgrace it, and which, when cognizant of their actions invariably repudiates the authors. The best men often suffer severe criticism, as do governments also, for the acts of inferior servants of which they are often ignorant, and which, when they are made aware of them, they neither tolerate nor condone.

It is surprising how, in the violence of feeling, outraged by the excesses of some minor officials, public opinion often fails to accord the most capable, judicious, and successful administrators immunity from a censure which does not distinguish between acts official and acts non-official.

The psychology of a negro is one of the most difficult things to understand or to control. It very often imposes a task upon governments which can only be fairly appreciated by those acquainted with African life. For the most part the colonial departments keep pace with the progress of their imperial standards, though now and again they are

victimized by representatives who are totally unworthy, but who, when they throw the dice on the side of plunder and thus against the ideals of their sovereign polity, invariably lose.

But freebooters are in ample evidence. In most governments they mar efficient administration, but they must not be mistaken for the administration. In telling their story we disclose the acts of individuals and not of parliaments. The latter, we have found, usually deal judicially with the former when brought before them for acts of lawlessness. Nevertheless, in the interim, between the initiation of an exploitation and its culmination in official condemnation and punishment, the negro community generally suffers a most frightful nightmare.

One day a white man galloped into the town on a fine steed as suddenly as if he and his steed had come up out of the ground. The effect was electric, for a first horse has something of the mystery and magic of a first aeroplane. That night the streets hummed with excitement. What was his business there? Next morning they were told: fifteen hundred *serviçais* for the plantations of San Thomé and Principe without delay. The news made the natives see blood. They sniffed the air like sleuth hounds and smelt the scent of the dead on every road leading to the cocoa islands. How could they trample upon the bones of their forbears and pick wealth for taskmasters who had done them to death, under plants where they lay down and perished? The answer was a thundering no from the throats of a unanimous people.

But the horseman had in his pocket the licence from head-quarters which could not so lightly be ignored. With it he came direct to the man who was perhaps better qualified than any other man in all the colony to get, by foul means, what he wanted.

He was the *chefe de posts;* his cunning and ability

having won him this distinction. He was thin, undersized, with a crook in his nose, a deformity in his teeth, jet black hair and eyes closely set, with eyebrows which met on the bridge of his nose. His lips were cruel and determined. He had a low forehead on which was stamped an encyclopædia of subtlety and other things.

This man was destined to receive a rude shock both from his superiors and his inferiors, in such a personal form as made him rue ever touching "indentured labour." It is just as well he did touch it, otherwise his vile policy and conduct would never have come to light. He was court-martialled by two thousand rebels from whom he eventually escaped as by the skin of his teeth. His Government justly degraded him and meted out a penalty which his crime merited.

He began by bluffing the white colony as to the purpose of the recruiting officer, whose real object was at first concealed. He was introduced as "first official of telegraphs." Of course no one was deceived, because we knew, through the natives, what demand had been made. Our suspicions were aroused, so we closely followed the progress of events with marked attention.

The offset of the business proper was the compulsion of a native, who, when he applied for a permit to journey to the coast, was forcibly enrolled as a "volunteer" for the plantations. The act was true to tradition.

The Chefe then assembled the head chiefs together. To them he pictured an alluring scheme which would put fine cloth on their backs, and fine money into their money bags. The plan savoured nothing of slavery. They would be received by the Governor-General with great demonstration, and reviewed by him as if they were soldiers. In twelve months they would be back at home and looked upon as heroes who had made their fortunes.

The terms were never tested so they were never proved,

but there is reason to believe they were genuine, and probably would have been accepted by the natives had they been presented by a wiser and more acceptable Chefe. One thing, however, the auditors believed, that there was no one among them more untrustworthy than the man who had spoken. San Thomé and Principe certainly had a bad reputation, and the Congolese were not prepared to perpetuate it.

An old man with a long grey beard and bald head stood up to reply. Leaning upon his staff, a pathetic figure, he said, "We have given our money in taxes, our sons in labour, our grandsons in foreign service, and—" pulling his flowing whiskers through his hand, he added—"there is now no one left in our towns but old men like myself, with both feet in the grave. We have no one to give."

Before he had finished the white man was purple. The blood stood out on his neck and face as if from apoplexy, or beer. He at once made prisoners of the two head chiefs: Kalamfwa, who had spoken, and Buta, who afterwards became the rebel general. At this act of tyranny fifty chiefs volunteered for prison and moved in a body to follow their leaders. The white man was again out-generalled. He was compelled to declare the two men free. He could not accommodate so many prisoners, nor was he prepared to incite so drastic a step as would probably focus international attention upon him. He declared them all at liberty to return to their towns. In the same breath he confiscated the 10 per cent commission which the administration had conceded to these men for collecting the taxes. To this the chiefs bowed without demur. Foiled a third time, the Chefe in his dementia, deposed the lot from their chieftainship, and dismissed them with a gesture of ill-omen.

As a parting shot he flung out after them a tempting bribe which not one heathen would deign to turn and pick

up. Under every argument, promise, threat or persuasion, they stood as one man, from the king to the last subject, leaving the white man fuming and foaming like an animal at bay.

The way their unity was broken up is a tragedy. Such men as "His Excellency" are not so easily daunted. A few years on the West coast of Africa provide irreligious men with a soul of brass, a face of adamant, and a skin of flexible steel. To such, foul play is more profitable than fair play, where there is no danger of being brought to book. The chances are all on the side of the man with a "Colts" or a "Mauser." There are other arguments more acceptable, such as silver and preferment, though not quite so persuasive and not so cheap. As a final recourse one can always shoot a negro and put his body quite outside discovery, even if anyone dare to search for it. So the Chefe set his wits to work.

The king and his satellites were the first victims of his smooth tongue and liberal exchequer. Others were victims either of the rifle or the ravisher, and in many cases victims of both. Twenty men were given from the royal court, whereupon a mental and moral rot set in throughout the whole clan, out of which a large batch of *serviçais* were despatched to the coast.

The ice was broken. The Resident followed it up with a threat of a thirty dollar fine, or six months' imprisonment for every chief who refused to give him men. This had the effect of driving many refugees over the border into Congo Belge. Those who remained began to prepare for war.

The revolution was precipitated by an act of murder. A white man with a body of infantry had been ordered to hunt and capture Buta. When almost on his heels, Ndombele, one of Buta's clan, went down to the water to drink. As he stooped to drink a shot rang out in the rear

and the youth fell headlong into the water. That was the first warning Buta had that the soldiers were surrounding him. He made good his escape. The same night the war drums were sounded and fighting men flocked in from every quarter. They held a council of war which went far on into the next night. The cup of foreign iniquity was adjudged to be full, and the following day Buta, with an immense army, raised his standard outside the chief city.

Tulante Buta was a short, fat, genial negro, with a big, round face, distinguished, like the face of another famous general, by a big wart. It was not the face of a warrior, but of an adult child, wreathed in smiles and wrinkles. But he had the mind of a great soldier, the tenacity of a leech, and the authority of an emperor. One brain ruled the country, one hand swayed the armies, one finger directed the revolution. It was the brain, hand, and finger of Buta. He could drink wine and vomit it to make room for more, but he was paramount. In a single night he was supreme over fifty thousand.

War, in the first instance, was declared against the native king and his ministers for having "sold the country" for foreign silver. The royal court was thrown into great confusion. His Majesty feverishly distributed weapons and picketed the outposts.

That night we went out to the edge of the plateau to view the camp fires of the rebel army in the valley below. Every native in the city, under the erroneous impression that the attack would be against them, armed themselves in self-defence. All their portable property, together with their women and children, were put in our compound for safety. The king and his counsellors appealed to us for help, but their effort was frustrated by an official and ecclesiastical veto. The air was as though charged with electricity, and seemed to hang over the people like some

awful doom. Buta warned us to keep ourselves within the compound, where we should not be molested. He also warned the Chefe that if he kept his soldiers out of the fight he would not be attacked. They were out to do battle with the king who had betrayed them.

As the cocks began to crow in the dawn of the next day, Buta opened fire upon the city. They were received by a withering fusilade from the Government soldiers, but the firing was erratic. The air buzzed with bullets. They chipped off branches in our avenue, pierced the walls of our houses and pinged through the zinc roofs of the buildings. At length the rebels got into the town and set fire to the native quarters. Now and again an explosion located where the king's party had stored a keg of gunpowder. The rattle of musketry, in which flintlock and carbine could easily be distinguished, filled the air. Dense clouds of smoke rose up and spread out like some fabulous monster of evil portent. In those clouds floated away all the possessions of the defenders, which had not already been looted by the rebels. They fought their way into the centre of the town, then into the king's bungalow, and when they found their quarry had eluded them they burnt it down. We witnessed this lurid scene from a point of vantage, concealed and secure.

During the retreat from the king's blazing palace, a low shot from a rifle blew away part of the leg of an insurgent, who was carried in to us to die.

Two of the king's counsellors had taken refuge secretly in our bedroom. One was in the last stages of sleeping sickness, the other in the last stages of fright. The latter well knew that he was so thoroughly hated by the revolutionists that they would probably have flayed him had they captured him then. We found him under our bed with a magnificent elephant gun in his grasp and a heap of cartridges at his elbow. For safety's safe we were compelled

to disarm him, for on the slightest sign of discovery he would have fired, which would have meant his death, with the house that gave him shelter burnt into the bargain.

The firing of the king's residence marked the first phase of the fight. Having attained this object, the storming party drew off, leaving half the city sacked and smouldering in ashes.

The revolution now took a new turn. Contrary to his promises, the Chefe had fired upon Buta's men. In so doing he had drawn the united fury of the warriors upon himself. An attack upon him at nightfall was planned. Before the plan could mature, however, and at the request of the Chefe himself, we were able to arrange a truce. Whilst some of our party were away settling the terms of the armistice, the town was suddenly attacked from the east by the Mbanz'—a Mputu clan—a large, warlike tribe in the hills. The Chefe was panic-stricken. He came in person to beg us to go out to stop the attack. We went. Outside the compound we found a priest sitting in the roadway, with his head in his hands, looking as though he were sitting in sackcloth and ashes. Together we went out into the firing line and called a truce, pending the return of the embassy to Buta. The men responded obediently, turned and filed their way again up into their fastnesses.

The result of the *pourparler* was an exchange of peace signs between the chief officer, who sent a clip of cartridges to Buta, and Buta returned the equivalent to the white man in the form of a charge of gunpowder. The main contracts in the armistice terms were that we English should be present as witnesses to what Buta had to say, and that we should see the evidence safely in the hands of the Governor.

The morning was clear and hot. The smell of burning was in the atmosphere. Subdued excitement made every

nerve tingle. Buta was coming with his men to hold a court-martial on the principals of a sordid tragedy, the chief of whom was a European, though he did not at that moment even dream of it.

Early in the forenoon 2000 negroes marched into the town, hideous, weird, and grim in their heathen war colours. They sat down round a little knot of white people at a table in the centre. We were under the spread of acacia trees, magnificent in their purple blossom. The two enemies faced each other, the Chefe nervously puffing away at a cigarette, Buta chewing his cud. The swarthy general carried a carbine in his hand and a bandolier of cartridges belted to him. When he rose to speak the crowd almost ceased to breathe. The scene was dramatic, but the revelations of this incensed orator were more dramatic and tragic than anything we have witnessed or experienced.

It was an exposure and condemnation of the foul policy of the man at our table, which made our pen shake as it traced out the charges on paper. Kindezi, Nani, Luanika —towns burnt out in search of *serviçais* for Cabinda. Zulante, Sengele, Nembamba, Kiangala—chiefs forcibly "tied up" for deportation to the cocoa plantations overseas. Nvamba—flogged by Snr. M. until he died. Women and girls bound and ravished by both black and white whilst husbands and sweethearts were compelled to hold lights for the scoundrels. Nkunku—bound by the king's secretary, hand and foot, so tightly round the middle as to make two halves (*vumu kibudikidi iyole*), exposing him to the violent sun by suspending him in a tree, in which position he was thrashed until he promised to give his persecutor a pig. He was then cut down and forced to carry the pig four days, at the close of which he lay down and died. Two lads with parents too poor to pay taxes were carried off as slaves. Lema's head was laid open with a blunt instrument when he tried to escape the prospect

of slavery. Eighty-one men were taken from Kimbubuzi for forced labour on the coast. Homes were violated, families orphaned, persons outraged, arson, pillage, murder, and such-like attestation packed the rebel's speech for two days.

There was no exaggeration; just a simple, passionate unfolding of the plunderers, of whom the majority were native employés mentally and morally unbalanced by a foreign position which gave them ample scope to exercise their criminal propensities. We, too, have seen them; natives flogged, robbed, and driven to hard labour; the breasts of hammock carriers within reach of the *chicote* of the man lying in the canvas, torn open by the application of the hippo-hide; women and girls in labour battalions, outraged in turn by their taskmasters, then brought back to their drudgery. We know the name of a Congo town, and the name of a Congo wife, enceinte, taken into a fort by M. and there violated with serious results. Thirteen other women were outraged by the same man in the same place. The saddest sight to a respectable traveller is the flight of men and women to the jungle on his approach, until they are sure of his character and designs. The men slink from castigation. The women flee from indignity and abuse.

It would be a heinous sin for any man to stand aloof and inactive with such things at his door. We refuse to believe that any statesman would condone them could we but plan out the precise means of concentrating his attention upon them.

Buta said these atrocities must cease, or he would put 20,000 men in the field and drive the authors of them into the sea.

During the rebel's speech there was a stampede of his troops. The negro is a creature of high nervous development. He seldom reasons before he thinks. He has brains

and nerves which give him a temperament almost solely affected by extraneous causes. He lives in a realm which keenly whets his every sense to the dangers and enemies about him. Although two hundred to one, they feared some treachery as they sat on their haunches facing the white man they had cause to fear. As this armed force was hanging upon the words of its general, a door banged in the rear, like the report of a gun. In a moment there was a panic and every warrior fled to cover.

It took time to reassure them. When they returned, it was but to adjourn the court until the next day. Having held the first day's proceedings in the white man's camp, Buta insisted that next morning we should meet them in their own camp.

At 10 o'clock the following day we went into the enemy's quarters. We passed through the ruins of the town, heavily impressed with the gravity of our mission. The story we had heard and written down burned great channels of grief in our soul. The day was glorious. Above was all serenity. Truly the God of the charming day was not the god of the foul deeds of those who desecrated its sanctities.

When we reached the edge of the plateau, from where we had looked for the camp fires, a most delightful panorama stretched away before us. There was not a trace of strife. To me there is no more enchanting view in all Africa than the scene from this hilltop. It is nothing but hill and dale as far as the eye can reach. Dark streaks of luxuriant forest, and silver streaks of falling brooks embrace the hills with beauty of the sweetest tints.

In the forest at the foot of the hill Buta and his men were waiting us. As we entered the trees, sentries closed round us, shouting the password to the guards ahead. Presently we came into an open space, where we were received by the chiefs. Buta sat on a leopard's skin—a sign of dignity. His lieutenants squatted around him. There was a spice of

drama when Buta and the Chefe shook hands. The latter offered his opponent a cigarette partly pushed out of the packet to be taken. Buta's hand closed over the whole packet without even a glance at the donor.

Buta then stated his peace terms. In a sentence, the king and his courtiers were deposed and expelled the country. Kapitau, a very old man, was given three days to get clear away. The king was ordered off at once, to which sentence the whole of the rebel army danced approval in a wild, weird, war-dance, guns aloft, with yells and whoops of an unnerving quality. When all the evidence was ready for the Governor, and pledges had been exchanged to peacefully await His Excellency's reply, we dispersed.

The same night we took an inventory of His Majesty's regalia, at Buta's request, which were then deposited with the priests for the next king. Kiditu then went out into the night, a disgraced, dethroned, broken sovereign. He died in exile.

There the trouble might have ended had the Chefe kept his pledge. Indeed, the Governor's reply was eminently satisfactory, granting practically all the people had asked and fought for. The Chefe himself was to be dismissed and degraded. Maybe it was under the smart of this condemnation that he again took up the gauntlet. Be that as it may, his action was certainly that of a madman. He arrested four of the best educated, respected, and most trustworthy men in the whole colony, without preferring a charge against them. They were men who had given every assistance, and perfectly innocent of any move against the Government.

The effect was both electric and tragic. A waiting, hopeful people were turned to frenzy and blood lust, as if by magic. The clans again gathered in force, attacked and burnt the remaining part of the city, drove the Portuguese colony into the fort and laid siege to it for

days. When anyone went out for food or water he was shot by the insurgents. Buta captured the republican flag, set fire to the forts and buildings far and near, and bid boldly to defeat the authorities on all hands. He told off a force to attack the Governor himself, who was reported to be on the Noki road with a European detachment. The Governor was worsted and driven back to the coast. He then entrained his troops and artillery in the Belgian Congo port of Matadi and outflanked Buta through Belgian territory.

In imitation of their enemies, the black men wheeled about, dug themselves in, and fought the invading army to their utmost. They struggled hopefully, throwing up barricades in forest, glen, and jungle. They flanked their front line with T trenches, to which they strategetically retired when the Portuguese drove them from the front, which also enabled them to enfilade their own dug-outs when the Government troops jumped into them.

The Chefe, responsible for the renewal of hostilities, took advantage of Buta's concentration upon the Governor, fled the country, moving by night, hiding by day, just clearing the border as his pursuers were closing on him.

Still, the rebels were fighting a losing battle, as all naked, primitive Africans must, who pit their puny strength against the arm of a modern power, even though it be small. No matter how just their cause, or how desperate, they are bound to go under in a contest of arms. There is no hope for the African that way; a fact which he should not be allowed to forget. By wise counsels he will come to see that his emancipation is on a higher plane than brute force, of which he can never hope to concentrate as much as his opponent in arms. We must so protect the negro's interest that he will know that his wrongs will be justly righted without the necessity of resorting to arms.

Buta made the fatal mistake when he attacked the Governor. It was a bigger blunder than when he took up the fight. When the struggle came to a test of endurance the natives were hopeless. The soldiers naturally wore the rebels down. They burnt their towns, destroyed their farms, and drove them into the hills and forests, where they suffered fearful hunger, cold, and exposure. Many died. The whole country became one vast field of desolation. The remedy was worse than the disease. Many of the rebel leaders fled the country, others went into hiding, whilst their forces were broken up and scattered into wandering fugitives.

This state of things dragged on for months. A Portuguese embassy came to investigate—result nil. A British consul prosecuted enquiries on the spot—result nil. A tremendous evil has thus for years been hushed, and a vile desperado with blood on his hands escaped ordinary trial, leaving a policy, universally condemned, but still in ascendancy, among his kind.

At length, a general amnesty was proclaimed by the authorities. Buta and his men came up from their retreat to receive it. We met Buta outside the city. We had tea together that day. A jovial, cordial, reliable heathen was Buta, a fierce but fair combatant, who, in this sordid revolution at least, had stood out boldly for right against wrong.

At the Residency Captain M. read out to them the Government's pardon. The uncrowned king accepted it joyfully for himself and his followers. They returned to their towns jubilantly, glad to see an end to the strife. The Government had won.

A week or so later it was as though a bombshell had exploded in the country. Buta and his lieutenants were thrown into prison. They were charged with complicity in a second insurrection, which put a woeful termination to what otherwise might have been a peaceful contract.

They had now got the men they wanted. When Buta stood bound before his accusers, a gallant officer, who had fared badly in the fight, took hold of Buta's beard and shook it, saying, "Ah, now I've got you!" Chivalry indeed!

The men were sent bound to the coast. We followed them, but by walking day and night we arrived at the coast before them. We were permitted to see them in captivity but all our efforts to save them were futile. They were carried away on a gunboat into exile, where Buta, a heathen champion of right, a defender of honour, a hero of the oppressed, died, an outlaw, a prisoner. Before he died his enemies divided his wives among themselves.

As he passed our house in the darkness, on his way to banishment, the unfortunate captive slyly dropped a MS. which he had concealed about his person, in the hope that it would fall into our possession. It had been written at his dictation. The MS. is now in our keeping, and may one day see the light.

Such is a single page in the life of the Ba-Congolese.

CHAPTER IV

In the Wilds of Angola

TO get a mental view of an African thoroughfare you must not think of a main road in England, but of the worst rut, running through the worst marsh, fen, pits, ponds, and parish piggeries, with a mixture of spinneys, thickets, bogs, and quagmires over mountains which switchback from little Cotswolds and Wrekins to altitudes exceeding the Pennines, or the Cambrians. Now and again one comes upon a level stretch as comfortable for travel as a country footpath at home ; sometimes it is low, when one especially feels the majesty of the mighty things around, and sometimes high, when one sees a kaleidoscopic panorama of charming colours, indescribably beautiful.

But such is nothing to the native trudging along barefoot, bending under an awful load day after day, from coast to coast, from inland village to port. His world is nothing but an exaggerated concentration of Welsh mountains, Irish morasses, Canadian forests, flushed with the heat of a dozen London suns, and often flooded with as much water in a few hours as England may see in a season or two.

The African on the road is a perfect marvel. For the most part he is clothed in nothing but sunshine when at business, and sunshine is not always the best buffer between a caput and a load, or between a bare foot and a hard road. Under these conditions a native will carry a 120-lb. load for 1s. 3d. a day, or less. When the black man discovers a

Snowden, a Vanderveldt, or a Liebknecht, the first thing he will do will be to strike.

Most of the negro's strength is in his neck. He will plod for days with a weight that would make a Britisher drop within an hour, even supposing one could find the simpleton to carry it. Agility! He can travel from London to Edinburgh at a speed which would make C. E. Larner hold his breath, especially if you put Plynlimmon, Scaw Fell, and a few Peny-Gants in his way, not to mention a few additional rivers for him to wade through, or swim, or, if you like, bridged by single poles, whilst to make it more homelike, you could concentrate as much of the forests of England as desired somewhere between the Thames and the Tweed, with a bog or two thrown in for the sake of encouragement.

To travel with an African, in Africa, is a strange though profitable education. He is loyal to his caravan throughout all the vicissitudes of a journey. In the morning he gets up from his sleeping mat, stretches like a dog, tightens his cloth about him; his toilet is then complete, until the sun is up and he happens on a river. He leads the way along a twisting track which goes clean over every obstacle. He kindles a fire in the road, three times a day, to cook his roots or nuts, which he munches as audibly as his jaws allow. After a meal he flushes his throat with water, rubs his teeth with his forefinger, such little attentions serving him in lieu of a wash and brush up. When he comes to a town, he turns into anybody's house for shade or shelter. He buys five hard maize cobs for a penny as eagerly as a boy in Europe buys toffee. Sometimes he turns aside to climb a palm tree for a drink; a feat at which he is a prodigy. Provided he could get a palm belt big enough, and a chimney block which would not let it slip, he could outpace the best steeplejack up any stack in Europe, or America. Interest, wonder, and humour crop up every-

where in the wilds of Angola. A whole caravan will pass a sardine tin round the whole company for a lick of the oil left in the bottom of it.

We have often felt the African bush to be the loneliest place in the world. Miles upon miles of jungle stretch as far as the eye can reach, and farther, often with no sign of life. It grows grass, the stems of which can be used as house rafters, wall battens, or walking-sticks. We have measured some of them twenty-eight feet long. It breeds beasts graceful and beasts loathsome. In it the heat gathers like a vapour, until one seems to breathe fire. At times there is a silence which is awful, as though it were a lull before the crack of doom.

For sixty days we wormed our way in and about the heathendom of the Mbamba wilds, on the West Coast. When we arrived at our destination we were adjudged to be the reincarnation of a white man who had died in the country.

Transmigration of souls is a common factor of Congo faith. Some physical peculiarity, a mannerism, anything which reminds them of someone dead, is taken as a proof that the spirit of that particular person has returned in the individual under notice. A tall, thin white man, with a spring in his gait, was always considered to be the father of Ntalu, who, some years before, had fallen from a palm tree and broken his neck.

There is a common idea among the natives that we travel Africa solely to buy up the souls of their dead. The trunks we have are used to pack the spirits in. The water tanks round our houses are to store them in until we can despatch them to Europe. Our favourite way of doing it is with a camera, commonly called a " box."

When Nsaku, a negro nurse-boy, returned from a visit to England, the people came to him for news of their dead friends. Did you see Ntoni? What was Nsamu doing?

When Nsaku denied the supposition and ridiculed the idea, they got angry with him and charged him with being in complicity with the white man.

At Nyodi we found all the farms destroyed by wild pigs. When we advised the people to trap them, or shoot them, they were horrified. They were convinced that their dead were revisiting the scenes of their human life in the form of swine, and that to destroy them would be to destroy their own kith and kin.

This delusion often sent the inhabitants scurrying into hiding until we had passed. In a little time they would be partially reassured, and would watch us timidly and curiously whenever we pitched our tent.

The white man is a never-ending enigma to the African bushman. To him he is a spirit if not a demon, for no one but spirit or imp could do the things he does. He carries his house about with him ; a bundle of sticks, string, and cloth. His camp paraphernalia consist of the queerest oddments with which he makes a bed to lie on, a chair to sit on, and little tables such as their greatest king has never set eyes on. From funny little baskets he takes out pots to cook in, wash in, drink from, and innumerable other arrangements for uses they have never dreamed of. He never puts his meat in his mouth with his hands, nor delves his fingers into the soup, like ordinary mortals, but feeds himself by a wonderful manipulation of grotesque instruments. He pours water, steaming hot, from vessels which have never been on a fire, holds his teeth in his hands whilst he washes them, squirts sparkling water from a bottle without taking the cork out, carries a " bit of water tied together," into which he puts his image whenever he wants to look at it, and performs many more such-like oddities which no terrestrial being has ever been known among them to accomplish.

We had been travelling through dense bush for hours,

meandering among the hills, striking into a town here and there, skirting the boundaries of ruined villages, or threading our way across stretches of bean-fields and gardens, when we came to a town in a clump of trees on the plain. A friendly native had preceded us, and by extolling our peaceful disposition, had a wild, excited crowd of dancing natives to meet and greet us. Soon after we had made camp, a party of hunters returned with their game ; a huge python, which they proceeded to skin and cut up into pieces to make an evening stew. There was enough for all, but sentiment compelled us to decline a steak, with thanks.

Every man then proceeded to get drunk in celebration of our advent. Bits of clothing from distant stores were worn in turn by all the friends of the owners, to mark the occasion. A belt would appear round the neck, then round the chest, or thigh, but seldom round the place for which it had been manufactured. That night they danced and drummed till dawn. As they danced they sang, and this was their song : " Come now let us dance our last dance for to-morrow we shall be Christians."

Next morning the whole countryside turned out to see " the white god " pack up his traps and strike camp. In the bush we passed a ruined house in which a maniac had been shackled. A few palm kernels were strewn within his reach for food. Further on sat an outlaw with his foot fastened in a tree-trunk of great girth and length, felled for the purpose. He was just able, with effort, to turn from one side to the other, or to lie on his back. We passed a third prisoner with his arms and legs chained to his neck. Evidently judicial fervour was deeply implanted in the community.

To drop down from the hills into the shady forest is a welcome change in African travel. You can then take your hat off and enjoy the cool. There is always the musty

smell of decaying vegetation, but that is compensated by the refreshing freedom with which one can walk.

The forest is a world of attraction. Birds of gorgeous plumage twitter in the thickets. Monkeys of appalling physiognomy chatter overhead. Lizards dart from tree to tree, and snakes from den to den. Huge caterpillars of brilliant hue cling to stump, bough, and creeper. Giant spiders rush about in search of prey. Butterflies of every shade flit from wild flower to wild flower, whilst myriads of insects drone through the atmosphere, like the low hum of a threshing machine. Now and again there is the sound of falling water broken by the cry of a quadruped calling to its mate.

How soon we pass out of this enchanting museum into the grim realities of negro life. On the banks of the river which winds its tortuous way into the forest we had just left, we came upon a crowd of natives intoning a weird chant in vain effort to exorcise a crocodile which had been seen on the upper reaches of the Mbriz River. Popular superstition has it that crocodiles are the abode of demons and witches, which lurk in the quiet pools in quest of human food. For this reason every native is a sworn enemy of the crocodile.

Some of the witches who were alleged to have done this had been caught, killed, and burnt. We were taken to the brow of a hill overlooking the forest, where the murders had been committed, and where the charred bones of the poor victims lay scattered about. The old man responsible for these atrocities declared that he would continue to kill witches as long as there remained witches to kill.

This old rascal brought us a boy to act as servant. The little fellow had been handed over to him in liquidation of a debt. Maybe it was a mark of respect to us, but, more probably, it was his surest way of getting rid of the responsibility of feeding him, coupled with a lust for an equivalent

in things more immediately useful. For various reasons we took the boy. He was the dirtiest little stripling imaginable. It was only by a fluke that we were able to teach him cleanliness, for all legitimate efforts had failed. Finally we resolved to scrub him down with a bass broom. This process, however, so delighted him that he was always anxious for us to renew it. We were in despair. At last, one morning, whilst we were busy on his back with the broom, he heard the click of a camera. He wheeled round sharply and realized that he had been photographed. At this he sobbed bitterly. As he wept he pleadingly promised to keep himself clean, if we would not rob "him of his soul," nor shame him by showing *it* to the white children over the sea. We at once gave our word, and since then Ladio has kept his.

On the way to the village we passed lines of hideous figures rudely carved in wood, and set about the place to do battle with unfriendly spirits. Two monster images, representing male and female, stood on guard at the entrance to the kraal.

The peace of that night was broken by a woman rushing about the town like a person demented, with an image in her hand, which she beat furiously, calling upon it to curse, smite, and paralyse the individual who had set a fiend to strangle her in her sleep. The truth is that in her sleep she had nightmare, and in her fright had wakened herself by snoring and by the rattling noise in her throat. To the Congo mind there is only one interpretation of this sort of thing—demons, and only one remedy—demonism.

It is an easy thing to get lost in the African bush. Innumerable roads branch off in all directions, some to wayside towns, others to watering places and elsewhere. Many lead to secret haunts and one's eyes must constantly watch the track one is following. Those ahead of the caravan mark off the direction they have taken by drawing

a line with their staff across the path not to be followed, and another line in the course they are pursuing. The evening destination is fixed every morning, so that the whole caravan can make for one spot at night. It sometimes happens that those who do not wish you to pass through their country send you off into a maze of silly wanderings, in which the party is split up and much worry and inconvenience result. Two nights we lost our bed in this way, one of which we spent on the floor of a hut, the other cramped up in a road hammock. On one occasion all our provisions went astray and we did not find them again until late next day.

One night we arrived late in a village. After packing our baggage in the hut allotted to us, we sat outside in the moonlight enjoying a welcome repast. When all the carriers had rolled themselves in their blankets for the night, we also turned in. As we lay low in our bed we detected a peculiar odour, which in a few minutes created nausea. Calling our cook we enquired what he knew about the house. He knew nothing, so went away. Just as we had resolved to turn out, the cook came back to inform us that we were in the " dead house," from which a corpse, which had been decomposing for many months, had been removed to let us in. The next minute we had our arms round the bed and bedding, making our way down the street to fresh quarters.

On our way to the next town we were compelled to wade through a swamp, which took two hours and a half to cross. The depth varied from the ankle to the neck. A hammock was useless. We had to divest ourselves of as much clothing as decency would allow and pick our way slowly from tree to tree and root to root, as the bog lay in the forest.

The country was flat and under vast stretches of marsh and fen. Still, it was thickly populated. The entrance to some of the towns was across a wide morass, into which the

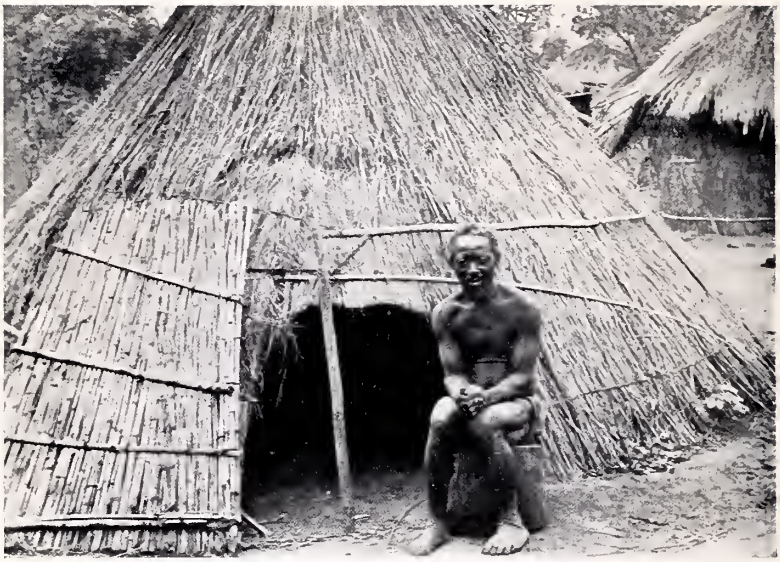
natives had driven two parallel lines of forked staves at intervals of about 10 feet, and about 3 feet apart, with a stout pole placed across from fork to fork like bails athwart cricket stumps. Along these were laid long shafts of wood, ten to twenty, not flat, but lumped together and tied with forest vines, like bundles of firewood. These bridges were broken in places, which necessitated one or more stalwart negroes getting down to help me pick-a-back over the breach. On one occasion a man put his foot in a hole, in a district in which the swamps abound, and pitched me headlong into the mire, a cry of alarm being choked in the throat by a torrent of slush rushing down it. We sat on the bank in the sun to dry our toggery. Occasionally a "chop" box (food) or a tea-basket gets immersed, when the damage is much more momentous.

From one such slough we struck into a town where they had kept the corpse of an old friend for six months, so that we might have a last look at him before they put him away. His son led us to the house in which the body lay. On entering we were surprised to find no smell whatever. They had dug a hole in the floor of the hut, not very deep, but at the bottom they had driven tunnels in the sides and ends, which had the effect of drawing off all offensiveness of decomposition. The body was suspended over the grave by means of a long pole, to which they had bound it, swathed in abundant shroud. He had been a canny old heathen. I remembered him coming to me to purchase my wife for any price I liked to ask. The dear old man could never understand that she was priceless. We gave him a pair of trousers which he wore as an apron is worn. He never tried them on his legs. Finally he returned them as being much beyond his dignity and intelligence.

Next day news reached us that two thousand women and girls had been collected by a white man to fell trees, build bridges, and make a road 25 feet broad for 80 miles. This

A Flourishing Town.

This town, Misurube, is an exception to the rule that the native prefers an isolated dwelling surrounded by a garden. Now that the presence of the white man offers security, the necessity for herding together for mutual protection has disappeared.



WAITING FOR A WIFE.

He is a widower and custom requires that he shall sit at the door of his hut until some passing woman show some sign of favour.

A TYPICAL CENTRAL AFRICAN VILLAGE.

meant starvation for the country, for whilst on this job their farms would go to ruin. The rascal had discovered that there is more work in a negress than there is in a negro. What did he care for farms and babies? He was one of those gentlemen who, by virtue of living far away in the jungle, not only get their labour for nothing, but the money the Government sends to defray the cost of it. When they want a pig or a fowl they just take it. If the owners ask either a price or a reason they are put in block.

We saw these women at work, for we put in an appearance before the exploiter knew we were about. Soldiers kept guard over them with rifles, as though they were criminals, and raped them at will. Many of the women had babies on their backs as they bent to their work.

Generally these labourers, male and female, are rounded up like cattle, by military who raid their towns by night, or from some unexpected quarter by day. A squad of these plunderers, led by a white officer, crossed a swamp, broke into the village we were in, deployed right and left with their guns trained, and collected as many women as they wanted, before they marched on. We followed just in time to see them belabouring a man of the party, who also was a captive. Upon our arrival the victims were released. Another posse stormed the same town at midnight and carried off both men and women, all they could muster. Christendom ought to make these things impossible.

We paid a visit to the officer responsible, and were able to inform him that we knew the law on the matter, and should report him to his superior. He at once despatched a guide with orders to release the women of whom there were two thousand.

For these services we were presented with a pig, the first and only pig we have ever owned. May it also be the last, in such form. Pig-like it objected to our company, and refused to travel with us in any way except inside.

In this region we crossed the most dreary, weary plain we have ever traversed. The pathway wriggles its way in view far, far ahead as though without end. It is switch-backed, hard, and stony. Skeletons were lying on the road-side. One was of a forlorn carrier who had fallen ill, we thought, and had crawled into the tall grass to die. His comrades had left him. The bush fire had overtaken him and had burnt the flesh off his bones, except part of the skull and his right hand. He still held his staff. He looked like a soldier fallen in battle with his sword gripped in death. There was another skeleton which looked as though it had been disinterred and thrown to rot on the plain, as is the custom of these people with witches and bad men. A third was of a man who had been done to death for necromancy. We wanted the skull as it was a very fine specimen, but we had to leave it under threat of being forsaken by our men. That was a risk we dared not run, so we passed on.

We know of nothing more violent than a tropical storm. The thunder is terrific. The lightning is gruesome. The most miserable place then is in a tent, perched on a box to let the flood rush under. Presently the pegs give way, down comes the tent and you have to take the consequence. To use a metaphor equivalent to the " cats and dogs " phrase of our school parlance, we should say that in Africa it rains elephants and hippopotami. And the wind! It is better imagined than described. The rivers become impassable, and one is compelled to wait until the waters abate if caught on the wrong bank. Our postman attempted to swim one in flood when he was forced to let the mail-bag go to save himself, though he saved the money-bag he was carrying to us.

One morning we witnessed the celebration of mass by a white priest. He first made the people about him hopelessly drunk, at the same time reducing himself to the same

condition, then stood—the vicar of Beelzebub—before a so-called altar, performing a mockery of religious rites. If the hope of the world is in nothing higher than such senseless clap-trap, heathendom will never cling to it.

In the same town a thief stole some hens' eggs from the house of a woman. When she discovered it she sallied out into the streets, mad with rage. In one hand she held the lightning image, in the other a knife, with which she cut and slashed the fetish. She cursed the thief and implored the idol to do its work, which was to smite, skin, and flay the person who had taken the eggs. That woman had a better hope than the drunken crew kneeling at a temporary shrine.

On our tour we saw dances which were not only attractive but graceful. We pen it as a mere matter of fact, and in no way as a commendation. Most of the dances are immoral. We believe all of them are more often than not made objectionable, for which reason we would ban the lot without exception.

The dance we saw at Mbengo had more hell in it than we could describe or would write about. For obscenity we should think nothing could excel it. Old heathens not only sat and laughed at the young heathens, but egged them on to lewdness as they drummed and droned a ribald accompaniment. We say no more about it; but we had seen the devil.

One day we ran into an unsuspected danger. The natives had held conclave to drive us away, or to kill us. They had surmised us to belong to the gang of freebooters. As we approached the group of towns, an embassy arrived from the head chief warning us to turn and retrace our steps. Not understanding this treatment, we replied that as our mission was a peaceful one we might be allowed to enter the villages. We went on. We entered the place by the chief's compound, saluting him as we went, to which

he made no reply. In the middle of the town stood a large tree to which, for various reasons, we made our way. The men had assembled, armed, and very excited. They had, a few months previously, driven out an English missionary, who fled for his life. Presently, as we prepared to sit down and eat, a party approached us threateningly and asked us to leave. In reply we pointed to our stomach—a native way of indicating hunger—saying we had come a long way and must rest before we passed on. Apparently they resented this decision, but went back to report to their friends. One of the men, as he stood gazing at us and our property, was seized with curiosity, much after the manner of an animal which, though hunted and on the point of being shot, cannot resist the impulse to stand and stare down the muzzle of the gun pointed at it. This man had on an old cotton shirt, and in the breast pocket a razor stood up to view. As he stood absorbed in our movements, I whipped the razor from his pocket, at the same time expressing wonder and pleasure at finding such an article. I asked him where he got it. No answer. I then told him that I knew the city in which it had been made. No answer. I also said that I knew how it was made. At this he opened his eyes wide. "Would you like to hear all about it?" I asked. "Yes," he grunted, "I would." "Well, call your mates, and I will tell them at the same time." He at once shouted, "Here, you fellows, he knows all about my *mbele*, where it was made and how it was made. Come and listen." This was wizardry, and they almost tumbled over each other to get a seat to hear it. First we finished our meal, then we expounded on the nativity, make, and transport of a Sheffield razor. They were transfixed with amazement at so large a population as the "city of the knife," whilst the story of its manufacture opened out another story more wonderful, which they now never weary in telling each other. Thus the gospel of a

razor turned the tide of feeling and enabled us to disclose the real purport of our visit, which found remarkable acceptation, as evidenced by the simple gifts of fowls and vegetables for our table.

Two months in the backways of an African jungle is a tonic both bitter and profitable.

CHAPTER V

Wonderland

WHEN a traveller sets an earnest foot in Africa he finds himself in a new world. He sees things as they appear on the focussing screen of a photographic camera—upside down. He gets a sight of the wonders of the Wonderland of Alice, and of Gulliver in Brobdingnag and Glubdubdrib.

Here is topsy-turvydom in reality. Men do the sewing and wash the clothes. Women farm the crops and market the produce. Men snuff snuff often in lieu of eating meat, whilst the women smoke tobacco far more potent than thick twist.

Men and women never eat together in heathendom. It is not etiquette. It is more common for all the men in one street to feed together. The women do likewise.

Congolese make one good meal a day in normal times—the evening meal. There is a sort of early morning snack of " monkey " nuts, or roots, or plantains, or a cassava roll of the size of polony and of the consistency of suet, substitutes for coffee and rolls, butter and jam, or fried ham and eggs.

The evening menu varies according to the whim of the spirits which are supposed to supply the entrées. Rat, ranging from the mouse size to the size of a hare, is a rare dish. Snake makes a good steak to the taste of many. Fatty, plump, juicy caterpillars and grubs are special dainties. Many enjoy the stew of the monitor lizard. Others prefer the tasty locust. White ants with wings are

a universal favourite. Baboon cutlets are diet for the élite. Any meat or fish, however "high," is devoured with gusto by the heathen. If it be "high" enough to generate its own power of movement, so much the better, for by way of thanks they quote a proverb: "Meat has been able to multiply itself."

At a meal the natives sit round one cooking pot or pudding bowl, dig their fingers into it, mould the dough in their hand, toss it into the mouth, and thus bolt chunks of flesh and sponge that would give a civilized mortal dyspepsia for the rest of his natural life. A very noisy drink from a calabash puts the finishing touch to an appetite as large as it is strange.

A Congo house would be a queer thing set in a row of English villas or in a street of home cottages. The best we have seen is not as good as a farmer's tool shed, or some of the hovels in which villagers in the United Kingdom cure their hams and bacon. It is not the custom to put in windows, though a few make a hole or two in the walls "to let the dark out." There is little or no ventilation except by ways never designed for the purpose. The fire is not in a tiled grate, but on the floor in the middle of the room. Its chief function seems to be the production of smoke, which hangs about the roofs and rafters and colours them a pure jet black. The position of the chandelier in other houses is occupied by an odoriferous fish basket, the contents of which are usually as pungent as any smell, or combination of smells, can be. It is easy to lean on the roof, either inside or out. A Congo house is a place where you hang your clothes in the rafters instead of a wardrobe, and sit on the floor in lieu of a chair. The best place to undress is in bed, where you are also glad to arrange as much as possible of your toilet in the morning before you get up.

A street scene is very different from what the white man

has been used to. The houses are generally set in topsy-turvy style. He sees men squatting on mats about the doorways; girls pounding roots into flour and sifting it gracefully through unfamiliar sieves; heads shaved, trimmed, or minutely treated for evidences of life; jiggers extracted from the feet, and a hundred and one other odd sights which, when once seen, are never forgotten. We have seen vermin taken from the head and "cracked," monkey-wise, between the teeth. There you see men driving the needle or the shuttle, both of wood, with cotton which is just a filament of a palm branch. Others are seen drawing the threads out of imported cloth to remake into garments according to their own tastes. There are girls threading beads as bracelets, armlets, leglets, waistlets, and -lets which hang down the back from the nape of the neck. Coffins at a few francs apiece are made at the corners of streets where they pretend to ape the ways of civilization. Fish baskets, animal traps, sleeping-mats, reed screens, rush doors, are designed, finished, and sold on the public thoroughfare.

At night the street is often turned into a kind of caravanserai. Carriers line up on either side of the road, spread their sleeping-mats between their loads, cook and eat their evening meal in the highway, after which they settle down for the night under their cloths, or without them, if the night is warm.

In his use of imported instruments the negro often reverses the order of their application. A needle he pushes from him as he stitches. He stands at the back of a saw, driving it down perpendicularly in front of him with short, sharp, tearing jabs. He makes a chisel of a screwdriver, shoots edges with a smoothing plane, drives screws with a hammer, and a host of other practices of like convenience and asininity.

Congo is a land of contrarieties. A wedding-ring weighs

A Central African Dandy.

The African's taste in head-dress and personal adornment is decidedly peculiar.

anything from half an ounce to thirteen pounds avoirdupois. They put it on the leg, not the finger. For the sake of equipoise there is one for each ankle. We have seen them reach as far as the knee. Dogs of appalling breed, appalling appearance, and appalling condition are usually where they should not be, doing what they should not be doing. Hens roost, sit, hatch and mother their broods in the dwelling-houses, and the places where humans sleep usually get the benefit. They plant potato tops instead of potato bulbs, the chip off a vegetable stem instead of the root. The hippo potato would do credit to the proverbial Yankee story-teller, for we have hired a man to carry one, with a few odd things, have eaten of it every day for a month, and have brought back home from a journey as much as would last another week. Instead of a neat dress you see a loin cloth often scarcely able to do its duty. The farther you go into the bush even this diminutive article becomes less and less, up to a very fine limit, beyond which, some innate instinct forbids even the most benighted to pass.

Native efforts to imitate the white people in dress are not successful. An early mania is for hats, which they sometimes wear in tiers of three or four, or more at a time, when they get them. The scraps of clothing in one house are exchanged for those in another on any special occasion, until one has worn all one's own as well as that of one's neighbour before bed-time. The black man ties his "nosegay" on to his walking-stick. Both in the city, where dress is overdone, and in the hinterland, where it is underdone, one is ever conscious of a world of incompatibility.

The native has a power of speech in ordinary conversation and business which would shock European society. A bargain is conducted in full diapason. Whatever the final price is to be, the maximum and the minimum are

the keynotes of the respective parties, from which they run the scales until they both strike the same medium. Everybody within a fair radius can know and hear what is being sold, and how much it is being sold for. Or maybe, the seller sets his price, the buyer his price, after which the matter is left to a third party to settle, the traders themselves taking no more part in the matter, except to pay the money or receive it.

Everybody comes to know things of the most intimate nature, not by prying, but by mutual generosity. The most private matters, if not exactly shouted from the housetops, are shouted on the markets and in the thoroughfares. A party in one house keeps up a conversation with a party in a house over the road, or even in the next street. Conversations in any house are usually conducted in a public-spirited manner. When a woman angrily tells her husband what she is thinking about him, she generally emphasizes it for the benefit of all within earshot. The why and the wherefore of personal affairs are habitually demonstrated for the public good. Ordinary speech gives one the impression that every man, woman, and child taking part in it is deaf, and that nothing but a noise is capable of penetrating to the brain. So everybody shouts, giving rise to such a din, when a few are together, as to render it necessary to shout more to make oneself heard at all. The native is a man who must talk, which he does to himself regularly, and in a way as though he had a congregation. A story is told in a manner which makes it appear as though the teller were quarrelling with his auditors. For loquacity and emphasis the Congo native cannot be excelled.

On every hand you see something contrary to your own order of things. A baby is carried not in the arms, but on the back or on the hip ; not rocked in a cradle, but rolled on a mat ; not picked up by the body, but lifted by the arm.

Instead of being bathed in a pure white vessel of water with a comfortable temperature of 90° F. with castile soap, it gets a cold douche from the neck of a calabash, and is set out in the sun to dry. Instead of the rhyme, " This little pig went to market," picked off the toes of the infant, you hear the mother croon and sing about its fingers. The thumb says " I'm the master of the lot," the forefinger says " I'm the sign of danger," the middle finger says " I'm the tallest of the crew," the third finger says " I'm not far behind : a bit more and I shall catch you," the little finger says " Ah, but I'm the hope of the town, for a town without a little one is no town at all."

They do not tip the forehead in salute, but dust the temples with Mother Earth, and clap the hands three times. Instead of a cigarette-case they hand round the bitter kola nut as a mark of comradeship. In place of the afternoon cup of tea to a visitor they exchange snuff, or try each other's tobacco pipes. A pencil is stuck in the hair, not behind the ear. Things are carried on the head, not in the pocket. A bag is carried, not in the hand but under the armpit, slung over the shoulder by a string. The highest mark of respect is a drink of palm wine. It is the land where they use leaves as pocket handkerchiefs ; papyrus reeds as doors and screens ; palm fronds interlaced as portmanteaus ; dried grass as shelves ; brass, iron, and wood as jewellery ; baskets as plates ; the floor as seats ; spits as toasting-forks ; tree-trunks as bridges ; cane as tooth-brushes ; and where a multitude of other strange things contribute to the curiosity of the foreigner.

The amount of terra firma a negro takes in with his food is alarming. He roasts bananas or nuts in the fire ash, and devours them together with surprising nonchalance. He counts his fish, fowl, and flesh in the roadway as though it were a grocer's counter or a butcher's chopping-block. Food is often put into bags, the condition of which defies

description, and meat, before it gets to the cooking-pot, is often of such appearance and quality that we have need to cut it to see what it is.

Then there is the peculiar language of signs. Few European rules and gestures avail one in this world of topsy-turvydom. When you meet a friend you do not shake his hand, you clap your own. To mark your respect for him you neither bow nor curtsy; you put your hands together and then push them out and downwards, as far as the knee, as you stoop. Where you would say "yes," the correct answer is "no." The sign of ignorance is to rub the palms of the hands sharply, as if dusting them of flour. The "don't-care" gesture is a shrug of the shoulders. Assent is not signified by a nod, but by a jerk of the head backwards. The symbol of emphasis is not made by driving the right fist into the left palm, but by striking the left fist over the thumb and forefinger with the right palm, stressing every syllable. You do not "lay down the law" with a shake of the forefinger, you do it with two shaken simultaneously. To indicate the height of a person you do not raise your hand palm downwards, that is the measurement of a flat article; nor horizontally, that is the measurement of a beast, but perpendicularly, with the fingers straight. In appreciation of a joke you do not slap the jester on the back, you smack him on the hand, which he instinctively raises at the psychological moment for the purpose, snapping thumb and finger with a click as you do it. Instead of addressing one as "sir," you say "uncle," "grandfather," or "father-of-a-hundred," though you have never seen him before and may never see him again.

Native names are interesting: Mr. Blazing-hot, Mr. Don't-you-know, Mr. Nobody-to-bury-me, Miss Knock-me-about, Mrs. Which-trousers, and so on.

The native language, too, is a wealth of queer expressions. To be proved wrong is to be "turned upside down." To

die is to " climb the hill." To wait patiently is to " throw your heart down." Instead of saying, " I really do not know what to do," you say, " My heart is not at home." Instead of saying, " He has made him sad," you say, " He has twisted his neck." Instead of, " I'm horrified," you say, " My hair shivers." You do not tell one to " Get out of the light," you tell him to " Take the darkness away." You do not say, " I am uncertain," you say, " My heart stutters." " I am grieved," would be " My heart is warped." The ankle is the " elbow " of the foot ; the clavicle is the " shoulder spoon " ; the diaphragm is the " heart fence " ; and the spinal marrow is the " brain of the backbone." Stockings are called " leg bags." Barley is " maize with whiskers on."

The native in his turn gets a good deal of amusement out of the white man. He is quick in noticing his chief characteristics, to which he attaches a name which usually fits them to a T. For example, one man who takes a lot of time thinking out a thing is known as " Mr. Lot-of-thought." Another whose gait is peculiar is " Mr. Peacock." One who never lets the " grass grow under his feet " is " Mr. Rush-about." One with a spring in his feet is " Mr. Tip-toe." Another who likes a joke is " Mr. Laughter." One who is an inveterate smoker is " Mr. Suck-pipe."

The joy the negro obtains and the joy he affords to others make it worth while to cultivate his acquaintance and friendship.

CHAPTER VI

Things about Congo Men

THE Congo native is a jolly soul in spite of his degraded condition in life. He is more human than many of his more civilized fellow-beings admit. We have heard it said that he is a " beast." We have proved him a superior kind of " beast " to those who attached to him the label. It is a judgment, born of a contact with African races in terms of whips, goad-poles, yokes and rifles, which is capable of nothing humane, even to a poor dumb brute ; the judgment of men who slander the negro with a callous and careless disregard for the truth.

One wonders how and why the phrase " lazy as a nigger " came into vogue. As a generalization it is false. There are idle blacks as there are idle whites ; shirkers who disturb the labour market the world over. But the imputation is wrong as a general term. It is an injustice to the African. Considering the conditions under which the Congo natives labour, on the whole, the results of their labour are by no means to be despised. A Northumberland miner, or a Glasgow shipwright, a Yorkshire iron worker, or a Norfolk farmer, or any other British workman, could not maintain his average output of work if he fed on the menu of the Congolese. Plantains and pea-nuts, cassava dough and water, make little flesh and still less muscle. The British workman must have his roast beef, his beer and his bacon, and he must have them regularly, otherwise he farms less, trades less, tubs less coal, smelts less iron, and does less work generally.

A negro's diet in no way resembles that of an Englishman, and he frequently goes many days together without obtaining a substantial meal. Maybe a palm nut, or the rind of a palm nut, is all that he may have to keep him up under a load, for days at a time. An African cannot work like a Britisher on such fare; nor could a Britisher.

In addition to this there is the question of climate. Northerners must work to keep themselves warm. The native must be careful not to work himself into a fever. He must observe his rules of health like any other mortal. His is a country where the sun gets into the very bones. The heat is responsible for the major part of his inertia. What can one do in a temperature of 110° to 140° F.? At such a temperature the atmosphere seems red-hot. Even ordinary days are not comfortable for tasks of a strenuous nature; more often the heat is an affliction, especially to the workman. It charges his blood as with a load; the heart is scarcely able to circulate it. The air stands still in the simmering glow, and one can do little else but gasp. The limbs become heavy, the brain sluggish, and it is utterly impossible to work to a European scale.

Ordinarily, the native is not seriously affected by the meteorological conditions of his climate. Normally he is able to sustain high atmospheric temperature. But the conditions which many employers seek to impose upon him very often break him, because he is compelled to do that for which he is physically incapable.

Furthermore, his lack of domestic and personal comfort must be taken into account. A good home goes a long way towards making a man a good workman. The Congolese have no home, as we understand the term. The word is a misnomer when applied to the native equivalent—a room 6 feet by 10 or 12 feet, some a little less, others a little more. Usually it is the only room. There is not a chair, nor a table. A narrow bed of bamboo poles with a grass mat on

it is the only resting-place, except the floor. The room is generally smoked black, and has a most unhealthy smell. It is a miserable, damp, dark, ill-ventilated, or unventilated, musty, rat-infested, ant-eaten, odoriferous domicile, where no white man, unless he is a brotherly being, will ever sleep if he can help it.

Considering his low scale of life and environment, mainly dominated by the fear of evil spirits and hob-goblins, it says much for his normal, easy-going temperament that he can uphold his vivacity and remain the light-hearted, spontaneous, genial soul that he is.

The gullibility of the average African is almost beyond belief. The sharper wits feed on it voraciously. The black man is thus the easy victim of the invader, as well as of the professional tricksters of his own race. We have seen him fall to the cunning of both.

Fivepence was asked by a native for a fowl, which a white man wanted for his dinner. He said it was too much. The sharper then offered him a belt. Now the cost of the belt was threepence, all expenses covered, leaving a small margin of profit to boot. As expected the negro took a fancy to the belt and was at once eager to secure it. He was charged sevenpence *and the fowl.* Still, the heathen paid the price and went off to enjoy his purchase, happy though deceived.

There is a section of negroes, too, who traffic on the credulity of their simpler brethren. To rid themselves of an epidemic of disease some headmen sent for a native priest : a " priest of the dead." They believed he would be able to ascertain from the dead, not only the cause of the disease, but the remedy also. When he arrived he ordered chickens to be stewed, with all the accompanying snacks of relish common to native cookery. These, he said, were necessary to present to the spirits of the departed in order to secure their attention and favour. With this generous load of savoury offerings he betook himself to the

A Puberty Ceremony.

TYPES OF ZOMBO BEAUTIES

BIRD CATCHING.

This sport is confined to only a small section of the African inhabitants. The birds are a species of canary, and sweet singers. The cages of bamboo are very neatly finished, and the sight of them on the roofs gives a refined touch to the sordid environments of an African village.

cemetery in the heart of the forest, ostensibly to feed the disembodied spirits, but in reality to feed himself. After feasting, he licked his fingers, then sat back against a tree to kill time and to enjoy his contents. After a time he returned to the people to report his interview with the dead. He informed them that the ghosts were delighted with the food they had sent, and that, providing they would unanimously agree to send them "one large pig" they would stop the plague. The pig was readily given, and as readily led off by the priest into the domain of the dead, where he knew nobody dare follow him. So, after feasting like a Congo lord, the rogue stood, at nightfall, with a pig and a handsome fee to his credit; profits of a barefaced quackery common to the spiritism of heathendom.

That the native is a polygamist, simply means that he has exposed himself to the peculiar forms of vice patent to the habit. It has made him a sensualist. The custom has grown out of lust: sexual and social. Also plurality of wives makes a negro big and important among his fellows. His subsistence is more sure, too, because there are more to farm for him, and more to feed him. He says, that to own but one wife is as big a risk as to own only one belt for palm climbing. If it breaks "you are done for." Polygamy is his insurance against such a calamity.

The women themselves are responsible for the practice of polygamy. They are driven by fetish delusions, after childbirth, to isolate themselves from their husbands for three years, or even five, during which time neither husband nor wife can pass the gulf which a stupid habit has thrust between them. To bridge the period of separation the negro multiplies his wives.

His wealth is determined by the number of wives he has, so that his marital appetite is seldom satisfied. The father of our personal boy was much chagrined when we refused to lend him twenty-five francs to buy a sixth wife. A

young chief of our acquaintance already has ten wives, quite a moderate number. A friend of ours counted his children, twenty-five, but he came back next day to say that he had made a mistake, he had twenty-six. An older hand was able to number forty. Children and women are the most valuable stock a heathen possesses.

Men also control the disposal of their daughters and nieces. The management of a family is in the hands of the maternal uncle, who makes the contracts and reaps the benefits. A man's dignity and influence depend extensively upon the fruitfulness of his sisters. Girls are priced like so many cattle, and sold off irrespective of age or destiny. We know one little girl who went for 3s. 6d. Another, a little older, was exchanged for 24s. The latter was betrothed to an old man rotting with a loathsome organic disease and suffering from a number of functional disorders. The girl ran away from him, but was caught and sent back, tied in a basket after the manner in which pigs and goats are tied for transit. She was dumped down in the house like so much merchandise. Very young girls are usually very cheap, but it is a safe speculation because they get more valuable as they approach puberty. A three-and-sixpenny wife will make a man a fortune before she is past child-bearing, provided the evil genii leave her children alone. Healthy boys and girls are always a negotiable asset to parents in league with a pliable uncle.

The root of a great wrong is in the gross misconception on the part of the men as to the purpose and character of woman. Their attitude to women is revealed in the following amazing proverbs : " A woman is like the snout of a pig, always pushing her nose into places she shouldn't." " A woman is like a piece of salt, can't be kept on another man's shelf " (cannot be trusted). " A woman is like a hole in a sack, always letting something out of the bag." " A woman is not a very valuable beast." " To eat with a

woman is to eat with the devil himself." In that language you have the reputation, station, and social outlook of Congo women.

Marriage based upon such diseased conceptions can never be worth much. To begin with, it is not accepted as a contract for life. It may be, if everything goes right. But do matters ever go right in polygamy? Marriage is not binding. It may be dissolved on almost any pretext: adultery, barrenness, or a whim. Frequently it is not dissolved for adultery, though that is universally condemned, not by a moral sense perhaps, but by a social propriety. A bill for twenty francs will often set the matter right with a husband. Marriage is not a contract on oath, but it is frequently terminated by one. Here and there real affection may be found, but it is seldom. A husband's view of the compact is threefold, the price he paid for the woman, her ability to work, and her capability to bear children. It is a common saying, that a man remembers where he met his wife, not because of a sentiment or a feeling, but on account of the money he paid for her. He recalls his wedding-day with the same brain cells with which he trades at a market.

From a financial point of view marriage is a safe investment for the native. If circumstances demand it, a man who has bought a woman has thereby purchased a right to all her marriageable sisters in turn. To what extent a man would exercise this right it is difficult to say, but in theory he could go on as long as there remained an eligible girl in the family.

When his wife dies, the negro expects those who provided her will also supply him with another, without extra charge. If there is no one suitable he gets his money back. A man, in view of his approaching death, may leave his wife to his next of kin. We have known old widows left to boys who have not known what to do with them. Should he die

intestate she may choose a relative of the deceased, but cannot choose outside his family. An arrangement may be made for her to return to her people, in which case the money paid for her, by the dead man, must be refunded to his executors.

Formerly, the penalty for adultery was death to the co-respondent. In those days it was the custom of kings and chiefs, who set the fashion, periodically to question their wives as to their faithfulness. A lie was punishable by death. The women were terrified into confession by the fearsome fetishes which their inquisitors held over them. To the question, "Have you been faithful?" the answer should be, "Not so much as a tobacco leaf, or a touch on the shoulder." King Alvaro Nsinga-nkanga executed Mbundu Amfumu for giving a leaf of tobacco to one of his wives, though he had gone no further than placing the leaf on a stone, at a respectful distance from the woman.

Barrenness is sufficient cause for the dissolution of marriage. The principal object of Congo wedlock is to have babies. A native has no use for a woman unable to bear children. No individual, man or woman, can outstrip another in eagerness for offspring. The man is a polygamist for this reason, although it is questionable whether he benefits by being one.

Nsiluvonda's wife had had no children for fifteen years. That would be fatal to the majority of native marriage contracts, and threatened to be so in this case, although Matu and her husband enjoyed a fair degree of civilization. Acting upon the advice that sometimes a physician or surgeon can correct what is but a physical impediment, the woman underwent medical treatment, and saved her marital honour by presenting her husband with a fine child.

When the man himself is an obstacle to the realization of their parental desires, he will not hesitate to loan his

wife to some one else and sometimes he will pay a man to build up a family for him. He claims all the children, and is as proud of them as if he were their own father.

When the question of sterility is in dispute the women have an effective method of fixing the charge upon a husband. Being anxious to prove his virility he very readily submits to the test. He is sent to catch a fish. The fish must be brought home alive. A fire is kindled in the most convenient place to catch the draught. By crafty arrangement the man is placed on the side of the fire opposite to windward, where he will get the full benefit of the smoke. The fish is put in the pot with sufficient water to bubble over when it boils. When the husband has settled himself comfortably in his seat, by the fire, the shrewd old priest piles on the wood to make a dense smoke. Congo folk, as a rule, can stand a good deal of smoking of this kind, but in a trial of this nature it is in the interests of the women to smoke the man out. They soon accomplish this, wherein lies the " proof " of the husband's guilt. As soon as he seeks the fresh air the women pronounce him responsible. The method is called : " *Wumba w'elongo.*"

Fetishism professes to cure his impotency by imposing upon him a set of senseless penalties and restrictions. He is compelled to wear twenty-seven wild berries as large as russet apples. He is tied to a plantain tree in a public place where he becomes the butt of general ridicule, like a man in the stocks. After the ordeal he is declared cured.

A popular uncle of old King Peter was a notable case of this rite, but it was for a different reason. Four of his children died mysteriously the same night. He was believed to have killed them because he had been seen the previous night feeding out of the same pot. A man not able to keep his children when he has them is the victim of a charge of incompetency equivalent to that of a man not able to

produce them. He caught the fish, was smoked guilty, wore the berries, etc., and was " cured," for the good spirits afterwards presented him with a famous son—the renowned Roza Nembamba. When the reproach falls upon a woman, she is got rid of, and there is an end of it.

Every heathen male must be circumcised, whether physically necessary or not. No Congo girl regards as marriageable any uncircumcised man or boy. It is looked upon by male and female as essential to procreation. Enquiry on the matter is frankly made by girls and as frankly given by those concerned. These confidences are mutually exchanged. A fiancé will question his intended on the matter of her chastity; a right which the purchase price he has paid for her entitles him to. Confidences are mutually established without fear or favour.

After circumcision, the youths of a town usually live together in a house built for the purpose. There they make their quarters until they take to themselves a wife. The place is generally a brothel which serves them until they launch out into the marriage business for themselves.

As a hunter, you see the Congo native in his primeval glory. It is his natal province, sacred to the male community. He begins to hunt game systematically about September. The country is cleared of the heavy bush grass, an enterprise which affords the natives a good deal of sport as a fraternity. It is mapped out into districts, and each party is confined to its own area. The firing of the bush is judicially arranged, violation of which, by anyone, is fraught with very grave penalties.

The uncle of one of our houseboys set fire to the jungle in Kambalele's territory. When Kambalele met him he shot him dead. The murder naturally brought him under the heel of the dead man's clan. They carried off Kambalele to Ngoyango, dressed him in palm leaves soaked in oil, and burnt him alive. Such risks usually preserve the etiquette

of Congo hunting, as honour preserves the etiquette of British golf.

The inauguration of the hunting season is a somewhat picturesque scene. As the spirits of the dead, together with the fairies, control the disposal of the game, the hunters repair to them for communion. The meeting-place is the spot where the dead body of a great hunter was ceremonially washed ; where his hair and the clippings of his finger-nails were buried. Sometimes they gather at the hunter's grave itself. It is called " the bloody grave " (*nkal' a menga*) because the first antelope killed in a season is there offered to the dead. The animal's bladder is taken out and filled with its blood, which, together with a first draught of wine, is poured on the grave. The priest mixes the oblation with the soil, making a mud with which he anoints the face of every hunter present. The act is known as *yow' e toyi*. During the ceremony all kneel, clapping their hands to express their unity in the ritual. The dead are summoned by the priest shaking a rattle ; a long seed pod of the *cassia fistula*, when dry, forms a good rattle for the seeds.

Then follows a remarkable prayer, too long to record here, in which the principal item is a request for meat. A blood-besmeared drum with a notched stick fastened across the vellum, is rubbed, whilst they sing a song which may be rendered :

Let the man who trusts to luck
Not come, not come,
And let the man who has no pluck
Not come, not come.

The living and the dead have now entered into fellowship. The season should yield a satisfactory " bag." Poor sport is an indication that there is a hitch in the concord and it must be found out and rectified. If one fails to " play the game " it soon becomes manifest in the falling-off of

the hunt, for tradition has it that no ghost will favour a hunter who does not keep the rules of the game, nor, indeed, the party of which he is a member. There must be no adultery either by the man with the gun, or his wife. The test of a man's faithfulness in this is whether he hits or misses when he shoots. Should he habitually miss, he is unquestionably guilty. He is fined and expelled the club. If suspicion falls upon his wife, he "proves" it in this way. He takes a bullet and addresses it, telling it how he wishes it to act; that if his wife is innocent it will show it by killing on the spot the first beast fired at. Nine times out of ten, the next shot shoots away the honour of a wife; the judgment of a man ready to do anything to excuse his own bad marksmanship.

The man who kills a beast must eat its heart, which he can share with no one but his wife. That is to preserve the Nimrodian blood in his veins. They eat together the head and neck for the same purpose. The wife must eat the part where the tail joins on to the small of the back as an extra insurance of her husband's prowess as a sportsman.

A Congo hunter never enters the chase without providing himself with a little bag of salt. It is for the fairies, should he happen on them in the hunt. Belief in fairies (which we deal with in a later chapter) forms an essential part of the negro credulity. Report has it that an ancient hunter was imprisoned by the fairies for having shot an animal without their permission. Salt was the means of his salvation. He was dragged off to nixiedom and shut up in an elfin castle where they set a little sylph to watch him. They brought him food without salt, but as he had some in his shoulder bag he seasoned it for himself. The sylphid saw him do it, and begged to taste it. Apparently salt was unknown in fairyland. After sipping meditatively from the spoon, the little elf seized the whole potful and made off to where the *perian* authorities were feasting.

They at once confiscated the luxury, paid a visit to the hunter in state, and ceremoniously dismissed him to mansland with a huge national order for salt. Since then every hunter puts a pinch or two of salt in his knapsack before he goes off with the pack.

When you have seen the black man of the Congo in his home and in the haunts of the wild beasts, you have seen him in the principal elements of his life.

CHAPTER VII

Things about Congo Women

THE lot of the Congo woman is a miserable one. No nation can rise higher than the position it assigns to its women. To keep its women down and under is to retard the progress of the whole community. The moral and social standard of a people simply keeps pace with the progress of its women. Congoland will only emerge from heathenism as it improves the status of its mothers and daughters. The wretched, forlorn, pitiable condition of the African women is one of the greatest, if not *the* greatest, problems of that continent. But what can she do against a consensus of opinion which has acquired its authority from the ages?

Tradition gives the Congo woman a bad name. It says that "if you send women to pluck grass, they spend the time plucking out one another's hair." "Should a woman tie a parcel for you, open it the first chance you get, and prove it, for no woman is to be trusted." "The fidelity of a woman never lasts long, for she will soon cease to carry even a wooden plate to the grave of her husband." (The plate is the equivalent of our flowers placed on the grave of a relative). When a man tires of a woman his complaint is: "My father did me a double injury. He tied me to a woman I didn't want, and then he made me pay for her into the bargain." Against such a strong and unfavourable sentiment, the women of Congo stand but little chance of winning their proper name and place in life.

The women themselves are somewhat to blame, however,

for the lot apportioned to them. They are wonderfully content with their destiny. From the militant point of view, to which they may one day awaken, they exist in a proportion that would render it easy for seven to take hold on one man and to impress him forcibly with the truth that woman is not man's plaything, not his beast of burden, not his property, but his co-equal; his companion, not his slave; his wife, not his chattel; the natural complement of his nature and affection, not a mechanism of labour and generation.

Here and there a woman may attain to an importance above the average. A favourite wife of a renowned chief, for instance, and the wife of a great hunter are generally superior to the rest. The latter bears a title, Nembamba. She claims particular portions of every kill, and is supposed to be able to "lock up" the hunting skill of any man who does not pay her such homage. It is her duty to "bless" the guns at the opening of the hunting season. Holding the gun in both hands, she spits on it, kisses it, makes the sign of the cross with it, stands on tiptoe, and in this attitude hands it back to the owner. Otherwise she drudges like any other woman.

Noso was a popular chieftainess of a large clan. We were present at her installation. Kiditu, the deposed king, conferred the degree, before he fell. Buta, who dethroned him, was his lieutenant on that occasion. Noso ruled well, and was a general favourite. Five years later we attended her funeral.

The Congo woman is an inveterate smoker. She cultivates her tobacco plot with as much assiduity as she farms her cabbage patch. There is always a hard plug in the bottom of her pipe, which she never seems able to light. It is kept smouldering by means of a red-hot cinder which she smokes through the weed. If the taste is as strong as its smell, we do not envy her appetite.

On the market the women are experts. They take in each other's garden produce, like the proverbial community which takes in each other's washing. They exchange roots for fruit and fruit for vegetables. Dainties spread on leaves are arranged on the ground as though it were a shop window, and served up like delicacies in a restaurant. She sells beans a penny a cup. One can get a spit of fish for a pocket-handkerchief. and as much pudding as one can eat for a snuff-box. For everything you buy she will give you a little extra called *Ntelo.* The *Ntelo* is an indispensable ingredient of every Congo bargain.

The life of the average Congo woman vacillates, pendulum-like, between farms and babies, which form the two principal interests of her existence. From sunrise to sunset she plants, hoes, waters, and harvests, often weighted with a baby on her back, and brass rings on her legs. As she comes from the valley she saves time by cracking the pumpkin seeds between her teeth for the evening repast, putting the kernels into a basket poised on her head as she goes along. On her back may be a child feeding from a breast either passed under the armpit or over the shoulder. At night she pounds the meal and cooks it. Her nights are but the prelude to a dawn of the same routine. She finds the food to feed the family and the money to pay the tax. The clink of her anklets is the ring of a servitude worse than slavery. She is often a withered, shrivelled, bent old hag before she has passed the prime of life. She is frequently seen carrying a load which some of us would shrink from putting across the back of a donkey. Though a whole batch of men, including her husband, may pass her on the way to the same town, with nothing heavier than a walking-stick, not one of them will deign to give her a helping hand. The wheel of destiny grinds her from puberty to burial. Then her daughters repeat the tragedy.

Her sole ambition is on a par with that of her husband. It is to have children. It is the way she secures her family, enriches her brother, and exalts herself above the natural and general contempt shown towards a woman unfruitful. Her bounden duty is to provide a family, in which she is aided by the most elaborate and the most complicated system of charms found in Congo fetishism.

She prefers to be a co-wife rather than the solitary drudge of a household. There is less work to do, less food to cook, less marketing to manage, and less everything when she has a set of colleagues to share the responsibilities.

As a girl betrothed, she is sent to another man's household to learn the ways of married life before she goes to her husband. Experienced women undertake the tuition and guarantee to send her to the man who has purchased her well versed in the intricacies, secrets, and offices of wedded life. This "school" is selected or approved by the prospective bridegroom, who assents to the condition it involves, that of complete freedom between his fiancée and the master of the harem in which he has voluntarily placed her.

As a wife, the Congo woman settles down at once to the main object of wedlock. Her first duty, as a prospective mother, is to provide herself with the official set of maternity charms, known as *nkamba*. It deals specifically with the state and relation of motherhood and infancy. The collection contains every provision a woman is likely to need from the beginning of fœtation, through the puerperium, on past the adolescence of her child. They come into operation on the first signs of pregnancy, and continue in activity until the child is able to manipulate fetishes for itself. To know these secrets is to know the life and history of every Congo woman.

The hopes of every native woman are made public as soon as she herself realizes them. In the third month of pregnancy, she visits the priest, a woman, to undergo a

compulsory, initiatory rite called *lambu*. She is required to eat a mess of *potage au gras* seasoned with aromatic condiments, whereby she places herself, and her unborn baby, under the protection and treatment of the good genii, until she is again ceremonially clean.

We witnessed this ordinance in the town of Mbengo, one of the most heathen centres we have ever visited. The novice was a very young girl. About her body were the strange mediums of her fond hopes, sponsorial trappings encircling her shoulders, breasts, back, neck, and legs. In front of her stood four pots containing fish, fowl, goat, and the fourth some small bush birds. There were many other odds and ends of paraphernalia set inside a circle of forest creeper, laid on the ground, which was forbidden space to all except the priest. Ten girls and five boys chanted to the beating of a drum. One strong, healthy, fat boy was told off to symbolize the sort of hopes the girl expected would materialize. Presently the priestess fell down as if smitten with apoplexy. Her hands were locked behind her " in imitation of an eagle about to swoop down on its prey." The girl's chief danger was in the form of an eagle, which is supposed to be the bird specially chosen by an evil spirit having designs upon an unborn being. After much convulsive effort, the priestess was released. She then sang for twenty minutes, calling upon the gods to send an eagle as a sign that they could go on with the feast. The passing of an eagle during the ceremony would effectively prevent an eagle being used for the purpose of destroying the baby. When the eagle appeared, the novice ran towards it, throwing the juice of a plant in its direction. Henceforth, no gnome could get at her child in the form of an eagle. Three small pinches of food were then taken from each pot in turn, and placed upon three firestones, from which the girl ate the morsels, kneeling with her hands behind her back. She repeated it three times. She was

next driven, on all fours, grunting like a pig, to a dirty pigsty over the way, in which she fed on offal, pig-wise, from the filthy floor of the den. Her husband was compelled to follow suit in every detail, because it is an obligatory formality whereby a normal fœtation is assured. To neglect this rite means the birth of a monstrosity.

Whether it be accidental or not, it is remarkable that the time chosen for initiation is when the ovum passes from the embryonic to the fœtal stage—that is, when it begins to assume definite structure.

The woman wears three black seeds (*zieki*) round the loins to ensure the correct formation of the limbs. To ignore the seeds would occasion a deformity in the baby.

On the same girdle with the *zieki* is a small sea shell (*nanga*) which is worn to prevent miscarriage. The word *nanga* comes from *nangika*, to hold strongly or firmly. It is supposed to retain the ovum until the fœtus is viable. Abortion, or premature labour, is attributed to the absence of the *nanga*. During the period of gestation, the woman wears a wristlet of three shells, three beans, the horn of a young antelope, and an eagle's claw. It is to regulate the pulse. To the wristlet, a rope is attached, which encircles the woman's neck. It is not a common rope, but one which has been used to secure prisoners. She is bound wrist and neck exactly in the same way as the Congolese bind their captives. This is to show that she is in "servitude" to the maternity priest. The notion behind it is that no witch in her family can injure her child, for during the time of her *grossesse* she is the "property" of the doctor.

When a woman enceinte is on a journey, she protects her child with a bean, a berry, a shell, and the claw of an eagle, *nkangazi*, which means traveller. With one she drives off the eagle; another represents her vows; a third, her condition of happy hope; the fourth is complementary

to the first. With it she creates round herself a neutral zone wherever she goes, so that she can foil the attack of any evil genius when abroad.

In the case of a multipara or the mother of a family who has lost children during labour, a special equipment known as *ngudi ebula* (placenta) is fastened round the waist. Superstition says it corrects all labour trouble. It includes three seeds (*mpeve*) having a twofold function. First, they regulate the weight of the fœtus, keeping it on the light side, so as not to overtax the membranes which secure it to the uterus. Secondly, they adjust the pressure at the time of delivery, so as to minimize the risk to the life of the infant when it is born. Three clusters of very fine grass, taken from a marsh, twisted rope fashion, made circular, and bound tightly with a single strand, symbolize the " maze," which, it is imagined, rendered her former children stillborn. The theory is that since the grass has been taken from its wild labyrinthine habitat, gathered, straightened out and secured in an orderly condition, so the maternal complications responsible for death in labour will be corrected by these *mazita*.

A berry, somewhat larger than a walnut, is worn on each breast to regulate the secretion of milk. It is the mother's lactagogue. Without it, it is believed, a woman will not be able to feed her child, owing to defective lactation, or its suppression. It not only stimulates the secretion of milk, but purifies it and preserves its colour. The popular belief is that it prevents demons getting at the little one through its food supply. It thwarts them in any attempt to vitiate the baby's milk.

As the woman approaches the time of delivery, she secures a second *nanga* in the small of the back, to assist the lumbar regions through that momentous event. No dress must be prepared for the child before birth, under penalty of a stillborn child.

Ready for the Wedding.

POUNDING FLOUR.

The Mamioe root yields a very fine flour when pounded in a mortar. It is the evening work of the women after they have finished on the farm.

At the crucial moment, the woman may betake herself to the forest. Maybe she chooses the gable end of a house. Frequently she prefers the public thoroughfare, open to the gaze and curiosity of the people. Seldom does she elect to remain in the house.

The Congo woman has an amazing constitution. She has been known to go to her garden in the morning, give birth, attend to herself, and, when the event is over, carry her own child back to the town. That is a feat which would terminate fatally with most women in civilization.

At the commencement of labour everything is done to produce the immediate birth of the child. An attempt is made, as much as possible without risking life, to stop the woman's breathing, which is thought to interfere with the contractions necessary for the safe delivery of the baby. This is done by those in attendance thrusting their fingers into her ears, and pressing the hand over her mouth. They beat the woman about the head and body, but chiefly the head, as a sort of inducement to rapid delivery. Liquor Amnii, or the clear fluid in which the embryo floats before birth, is freely applied to the breasts for lacteal effect. The woman is refused absolutely everything in the way of stimulants, even to a drop of water to moisten her lips, for the sake of the superstition that in labour, anything taken passes direct to the child, and is fatal. Much of the mortality among Congo infants is due to the drastic treatment the mother receives at this critical time.

The umbilical cord is never cut with a knife. It is an ill omen for a new-born baby to be "shown a knife." It is cut with a blade of strong grass (*diadia*), which has extremely fine saw-like edges. It cuts easily and cleanly, as any traveller will find out if he casually passes it through his fingers as he goes along. The cord is not tied; from the time it is severed until it stops bleeding, someone com-

presses it, kneading it between the fingers and thumb, with a rotatory movement. Only a person with a " hand " for the job is allowed to do this. No " hand " does not imply a lack of skill, as in a novice ; or of taste, as of the rude ; nor a natural disability, as a chubby hand not able to span an octave, but it refers solely to an imaginary handicap, imaginarily imposed by imaginary evil spirits. It is believed that a person is rendered incapable of doing certain things as a punishment from spiritual beings whom that person in some way has offended. No matter how often or how hard the ill-fated one may try to perform the doomed task it results in failure. For instance, Johanna tried to grow pumpkins and failed. The whole crop died on several occasions which was taken as a " proof " that she had no " hand " for farming pumpkins. She has never attempted to farm them since, in the belief that the spirits are against her in that particular business.

For three months after the child's birth, the mother is not allowed to feed it ; that is, until after the second feast. The infant is fed by a wet nurse for that period. The mother's first milk, or colostrum, is drawn off by the priest and thrown away ; thus, another absurd superstition deprives the little one of a very useful and necessary provision of nature which is to get rid of the meconium, a mischievous deposit in the bowels of the infant. When allowed to begin the feeding she may continue it for as long as five years, or even longer, thus providing the uncommon spectacle of a big child still at the breast.

A standardized cloth called *eteleka*, measuring one foot six inches by two feet, which is the only covering the custom allows a woman to wear during pregnancy, is hung over the doorway of the house in which the child is born, to keep off all enemies, material and spiritual. It is the sign of a successful event.

Until the baby is three months old, neither mother nor

child must cross the threshold, except in special circumstances. At that time she is released from all taboos, and begins to eat mud-fish, mice, leopard cat, and such-like food in which her taste delights.

The first thing a mother does when free, is to make an offering to the fairies for her baby. She goes to the nearest stream, takes a leaf, places on it a sprinkling of chalk, salt, and flour, then sets it on the water to be carried down stream to the munificent elves. As the leaf floats away with its cargo of good things, she trills a little extemporaneous patter of gratitude to the maternal will-o'-the-wisps.

From this point, she returns to repeat the process of her wedded life thus far, and continues to repeat it, until nature leads her beyond its repetition. Then her daughters repeat it in her stead.

When you have traced the Congo woman so far, you know the history and the lot of them all.

CHAPTER VIII

Things about Congo Children

THE first question asked, when a birth is announced is: "Is it a gun or a hoe?" A "hoe" is the insignia of a girl's life and station. It means work. A "gun" stands for masculine gender, and, on the whole, comparatively speaking, a good share of the joys of life, as they know it. "Hoes" are not thought much of either by men or women, but less by the men than the women. They prefer plenty of boys—"guns," a preference in which the old warrior instinct looms large. They mean strength when the war drums boom, and victory when the clans fight. If the firstborn is a girl the father's mouth droops at the corners. A "gun" is the signal for general felicitation. A girl or two are welcome if the supply of boys is liberal and regular. A girl is said to be a "redeemer," which means that she will one day bring her parents a needed penny, or at any time help them out of financial difficulty, so long as she is marketable. On the other hand, folklore says: "A boy is a piece of string, always useful, never useless."

As soon as a Congo baby is born, the first business is to "clothe" it. "Rags" (*mataya*), as applied to the garment, is very appropriate, for that is exactly what the article is. For years after, if not for life, the child may have nothing or next to nothing to cover its nakedness, but on the day it must have a "rag." These rags represent every female who visits the baby on the day of its birth. It is a necessity laid upon all the women to pay their respects, in this way,

to every newborn child. As she enters the room where the mother and child are, the visitor must tear off a strip or draw a thread, from whatever she may be wearing at the time—grass, palm fibre, or cloth, new or old, dirty or clean, and present it to the baby. These strips of cloth or threads, evenly spaced, are then tacked on to a longer piece, long enough to go round the baby's waist. The effect is grotesque. Until this has been done the women are required to sit on the floor like "statues." The gift of a "rag" entitles the donor to the right of holding the baby in her arms. When ready, the dress, which is the only apparel the child has until it can walk and talk, is put on, and is the sign for general freedom, congratulations, and raillery. They then hand the baby round as if it were something to drink.

To assist the healing of the navel, a bean is tied round the baby's neck. A guard, broken from the neck of a calabash, is placed over the wound to prevent friction and contamination. The slipshod way in which this operation is performed frequently leaves a hernia of astonishing dimensions. The percentage of children suffering from umbilical tumours is high.

The next concern is for the baby's health. Three seeds are tied round its ankles to make the joints strong. Its limbs are massaged with iron (*mingenge*) to mould the muscles. Sometimes the massage is only mimicry, done to exorcise the demons which may have got into the little one, despite the mother's elaborate defence against them. For this purpose she powders her hands with the dust of the *fiofio* root, then, without touching the body of the child, she performs mesmeric actions from the left big toe, up the side of the body, over the head, down the right side and so out at the big toe of the right foot, the physiological point at which all the Congo demons are expelled.

A baby's head is a very delicate province. There is a soft spot on the top, unprotected by bone, where the fiends can get in without trouble. To keep them out, the mother puts eight small red beads on the forehead, just over the nose. The *nkandikw' a ntu*, as it is called, also relieves the head in fever. Fever is always keenly felt in the head. At 102 degrees it begins to throb well. The head of a baby is in danger, they say, when fever makes the pulse visible on the top. The feeling in the head, described as " splitting," is supposed to be caused by evil beings stationed in various parts of the caput, driving in things for the purpose of cleaving it. The *nkandikwa* prevents the head from parting at the fontanelles, or the place on the head of a baby where the bones of the skull are open.

Very often a mother wishes to sit out in the sun with her baby before the prescribed period of three months has elapsed since its birth. She can do so on condition that she protects herself and little one with a helix shell (*futu*). Ntangi, one of the Congo kings without a crown, maintains that he lost seven children because his wives " aired the baby " without the *futu*. He then insisted that the error be corrected by obtaining a *futu*, and since that time all his children are living and doing well. Education finds it a hard task to overcome such convictions. Where coincidences are taken as " proof," it is difficult to dislodge the delusions which credit them. Bulu is a girl who burnt herself several times through falling on the fire when attacked by convulsions. They put the *bunzu* charm round her neck, from which day she has had no further onset of the disease. A belief of this nature is not easy to deal with. It establishes the roots of superstition, as a storm fixes the foundations of a tree.

As an extra security against the designs of evil spirits, a mother resorts to an artful dodge. She procures a little wooden image (*wumba*) and a calabash of oil. With the

oil she anoints the baby from head to foot. She addresses her child as "image," and the image as "child." They have now exchanged places. The image has become the child, and the child has become the image. She now treats the image precisely as if it were her baby. She nurses it, sings lullabies to it, feeds it, smacks it for imaginary naughtiness, in fact everything she thinks appropriate to an infant she does to the image. In this way she imagines that she has befooled the spirits who evidently lack the common sense to distinguish between the real and the artificial.

Normally a Congo mother is as fond of her family as any mother. There is only one thing which can effectively come between a heathen mother and her child, witchcraft. When once a child is stigmatized as a witch, the Congo woman will abandon her offspring. One such girl we found in a shallow pit, nude, starving, reeking with disease and filth, literally eaten alive by flies and things worse, left to die in a blazing sunshine, beyond recovery. Another died of starvation in a town alive with people. In one village they killed two boys and sold an infant into perpetual slavery for having bewitched the chief, who fell ill and died. Superstition makes a serious inroad upon the young life of the community.

One of the best known men on the Lower Congo came under the malison of his mother when he was a boy, for having "eaten" his little brother. He had thrown some seeds into the fire, which, as they became hot, exploded with loud reports. He was at once charged with destroying the soul of his little brother, who was calmly sleeping on the mat. But for the fact that he was the son of his father, Nekeka would likely have gone the way all Congo witches go. It is a fear which dogs the movements of every youth and maiden in Congoland.

As soon as the children find their legs, they enjoy full liberty. Their world is the same world of make-believe

as that of children the world over. A girl makes a dolly of a root, a plant, or a tuft of grass, which she ties to her back just as she was tied on the back of her mother. She carries all sorts of little odds and ends on her head, as she will carry other things when she grows big. She hoes her toy garden, pounds toy mealies with toy pestles, in toy mortars, and in her pretty baby ways lives the life of a full-grown woman.

The boys organize imitation bands, and play on imitation instruments. For a drum they make an artificial *mondo*. A round hole is dug in the ground about two feet deep. Across the mouth of it two palm fronds of different sizes are put. The sounds produced by striking the fronds with short sticks of a musical quality are precisely those of the *mondo* proper. They imitate a band of trumpeters with such perfection, by blowing into different lengths of grass stems, that, far or near, it is difficult for an untrained ear to distinguish the real from the false instrument. They counterfeit the rôle of every man within their circle of acquaintance. They build mimic towns, make mimic weapons, hold mimic fights, and generally ape the things they will do when they become men.

When they get bigger they make bows and arrows, and sally off to hunt the rats, their chief delight. Just as the men round up the big game, the boys round up the rats. They surround a plot and gradually close in, driving the vermin into a small central area. They place neatly made traps in which the alarmed rodents irretrievably fix themselves. The traps are dexterously camouflaged and placed in well chosen positions where the rats are likely to run when trying to escape the arrows.

When they are strong enough the boys go on the road with their fathers to carry their food and get a good training in the art of carrying a load, which will gain them cloth and meat in days to come. For weeks together they

will trot along at their fathers' heels, sweating under large burdens, but happy in the thought that they can begin to do things on an adult scale.

When they pass adolescence they stand on the threshold of a strange, mysterious primeval manhood, in which they are expected to repeat, with mechanical precision, the traditions and practices of ancient heathenism.

CHAPTER IX

Native Medicine

A CONGO native gets ill, so like other humans he also needs remedies. With his ignorance of hygiene, his careless way of feeding, his heedless habits at home and abroad, his nonchalance and his nakedness, it is a wonder that the negro lives at all. Insects bite off his toes, sting his body, poison his blood, and corrupt his food. There follow fever, septic wounds, skin rash, and a host of other like evils. Nudity often means pneumonia and similar troubles. His bare contact with the globe connotes an invasion of bacteria through every pore, in colossal quantities. By way of the mouth the supply of germs never wanes. What he eats and the way he eats it, often bring pain out of proportion to its pleasure. His dietary is specially productive of intestinal parasites of alarming dimensions, and in numbers we have seen to prove fatal with horrifying effects. His incisors may glisten, but his molars are probably rotten. He never cleans his teeth at the back, whilst he frequently develops a breath of prodigious strength which makes one wonder that he has a tooth left in his head. When he suffers he suffers badly. The fight he sets up against it is both quaint and touching.

The heathen never believe that sickness comes naturally. It is always attributed to the occult power of some demoniacal agency. It follows that their medical efforts are chiefly sorcerous. The official pharmacopœia embraces more magic than medicine. It contains a " specific " for

every known disease, but the "specific" is mainly black art.

The necromantic instinct is so rooted, that even drugs and lotions of European manufacture are regarded more as charms than as physic or liniments. A nasal fetish is more to them than a nasal douche. They think more of something to tie round the throat than they do of something to gargle in it. Foreign unguents are nothing compared with their own nostrums. Those who venture to acquaint themselves with new medicaments will ask for a mixture, and either apply the bottle to some part of the body, just as it is, or put it in a secure place, where they keep it as long as possible without touching it, as a charm for whatever they imagine it to be good for. They soon learn that a cascara tabloid has its appointed place in therapeutics, but they do not so soon learn that it has missed its effectiveness when bored, threaded, and hung round the neck like a locket.

Nevertheless in the pursuit of elementary medicine the native has often hit upon some valuable cures. He has classified them as "common remedies" (*mpasi mawuku*). Such knowledge and practice are not to be confused with their medical wizardry. For instance, the bark of a tree, *mpuluka*, specially treated with oil and salt, cures giddiness. For influenza, cassava water with the essence of grass, *madiadia*, *kuva* leaves, and the *kiakasa* plant are effective. Cassava root and the fruit of *lembanzau* are taken *ad lib* for colic. The juice of *sudia* leaves, salted and peppered, is a useful suppository. The sap of *luwiki-wiki* leaves, with oil, stops earache; that of *luziezie* leaves stops bleeding and acts as a local anæsthetic. The gum of the *euphorbia* is a good salve for cuts and abrasions. The *ndamba* is a powerful emetic.

In cases of chest and lung disease a sort of inhaler (*futwa*) is devised. The leaves of various trees, plants, and weeds

are boiled in a pot ; the patient sitting over it covered with a cloth, pot and all, inhales steam charged with benzoin property or something similar. The fumes act like nitrate of amyl or stramonium. The equivalent to a Turkish bath is a bed of hot ashes. Green leaves are spread over them, a mat is then placed over the leaves, and the patient who is liberally covered with anything serviceable is laid on the mat. In this way the bath acts as a diaphoretic. Many other remedies there are too, it is said, of proven worth, which the non-professionals use regularly.

Some of the recipes are as curious and fascinating as some of those among the ancients such as the hair of a patient cropped fine and administered by the mouth in doses of a golden crown full, for intestinal troubles ; the ashes of cremated newts and beetles rubbed on a decayed tooth to ensure or endure painless extraction ; dog's gall set on the head, assisted by horn smoke in the eyes for sickness ; and to wounds an application of disagreeable material. The history of medicine generally lies along the same route.

Congo medicine is equally pregnant with interest in professional pharmacy. Soil from beneath a flour mortar, prescribed for burns ; the mud of an ant-hill for internal ailments ; dung, inwardly and outwardly applied, for various internal and external disorders ; food rubbed on the joints for rheumatism and arthritis ; pepper squirted from the mouth into the eyes of a victim of fits ; for epilepsy, drums furiously beaten in the vicinity of the head to aid a return to consciousness ; limbs powdered with chalk and camwood for debility ; camwood powder and chalk sucked from a crude dummy teat dipped in wine, for St. Vitus' dance ; a pepper-corn chewed and spit in the ears and mouth for brain diseases ; water in which stones have been boiled, taken hot or cold, for gastric troubles ; the fin of a fish or the head of a snake, or the foot of a fowl, or the tail of a

rat, or all of them together, ancient and pungent, tied in a bundle to be used as "smelling salts" for headache and neuralgia; all these are curious samples of their unique theories of diseases and their curatives. It is a startling practice, but it is, nevertheless, the more sensible branch of their medical art and skill, because less risky than that in which the pseudo-art of the magician is predominant.

Where magic enters there is no boundary either of reason or right. In a town we know well a baby fell ill with high fever. The mother called in the priest. He told the woman to get a plate and a calabash of water. He then ordered the mother to follow him with the child. At the first cross-road outside the town he stopped, poured the water into the wooden plate and commanded the mother to set the baby on the ground, naked. This done, he took some small branches, dipped them in cold water, and sprinkled the baby liberally three times. This ceremony was repeated at all the cross-roads round the town. Then he led the woman from house to house, ordering the child to be placed on the roofs as they came to them, where he again sprinkled the baby in like manner. It was on the last roof of the last house that the solemnity was completed, and there the baby died, a martyr to false doctrine and treatment. That is magic with a vengeance.

The superstitious element of course is the main prop of the Congo medical faculty. Whenever a root, a weed, a clip of bark, or a leaf really does exercise a correct influence on a disease those articles never receive the credit. That goes to the wizard and his craft. An accidental benefit simply enhances the magic art. Even medicine proper is considered to have no virtue apart from the omnipresent priest who prescribes it. An ordinary individual may know the bulb, the tree, the shrub, the creeper, or the grass from which a real remedy is extracted; he may be well versed in the art of applying it as a physic, but accord-

ing to the law of the profession, unless it has passed through the hands of a priest it is useless.

This fetish condition is often imposed upon drugs of European prescription, too. Native mentality sees virtue in the external friction of a bottle on the places which ache, as well as virtue in the drink which goes right down inside to the seat of the ailment. It is the same faith which prompts the black man to hang a box of salve round his neck. The simple poultice, for example, made of cassava meal, is used, in certain cases, with a good deal of success. The method, perhaps, is not exactly what physicians and surgeons would to-day choose to apply. Maybe they would use a knife or a medicine, still poultices have been useful. For a long time the natives refused to make them for themselves. In no case, at first, would they use it if no white man happened to be there to make it and put it on the patient. All its potency was supposed to be in the white man's legerdemain.

This attitude is the fruit of a psychology which the people possess *en bloc*. It also invests the priest with an uncanny influence which has a sort of magic effect upon sick people. The way a priest dances in Congoland often has a healing result upon nervous disorders where they exist, and just the opposite where they do not exist. When he sings he drives despair into some, and folly into others. Neither dance nor song is commendable, but no heathen minds so long as he gets rid of his neurosis, or sees it inflicted upon his enemy.

Every medical native is more or less a songster. Their art of music is part of their art of healing. But what music! What art! We can quite conceive that a jolly song, sweetly sung or played by a home physician might have a good effect in certain circumstances upon his patient, but when attending any case the negro practitioner must either sing a song, dance a song, or drum a song, and all

three are as black as his medical art; a cunning, in which mystic incantations are not out of place.

Congo medicine men have special days for business much as civilized practitioners have special hours. We might call them "surgery days," after our manner of speaking of "surgery hours." These official days are only two out of the four which make a Congo week. It is because the names of the days of the week are of fetish origin. *Konzo* comes from *ekonzo* meaning joint, as knuckle, ankle, etc. A doctor practising on *konzo* day would ruin the profession as well as injure the patient by spreading a "disease of the joint." *Nsona* is from *sonama*, established or fixed. To attend a patient on *nsona* day would establish or render permanent the very disease he sought to cure. The only two days in a week a medicine man can practise are *nkenge* day, from *kenga*, to give up, and *nkandu* day, from *kandika*, to stop or to forbid. Any case treated on the first day is bound to yield (*kenga*) to treatment. A remedy applied on the second is certain to stop, check, forbid (*kandika*) the malady. In actual practice the eccentricities of medical men never decline.

"Wind horns" (*nbambi-za-mpevele*) are a specific for flatulence. Horns of antelopes are filled with an animal feculence, which is administered by the mouth to the patient, with a little palm oil. The face, forehead, and temples as well are marked with it. Diagnosis has established that demons are making "air passages into the patient," and it is the business of the *mbambi* to prevent the wind getting *in*. To prevent the disease spreading to others, small *mbambi* are made to wear round the neck.

Their method of massaging is very drastic. The affected limbs are kneaded after the fashion of a pastry cook rolling out her dough. It is done with instruments of iron (*mingenge*), which are like the prongs of a pair of compasses, only separate. They are held in the hands as a carpenter

holds a spoke-shave, and worked in the same style. A deformed joint comes in for an extremely excruciating pressure, just as a workman would minutely dress a knot in a birch plank. Another method is to lie flat on the ground and let the doctor walk up and down the back.

For extreme cases of debility twenty-seven berries as big as tangerine oranges are given, not to swallow, of course, but to hang on different parts of the body. To stave off giddiness, the dry skins of roasted peanuts are tied up in a bundle (*zunga*) and worn just above the nose. The chaff is chosen because, being light and easily blown about in the wind, it typifies the dizzy feeling in the head when caught in a mental whirlwind. A cardioid shell will protect one from sunstroke. A similar article tied on the chest will ward off dyspepsia. The head of a snake in the centre of the forehead will guard it against any form of cephalalgia. A *makonda* image as a necklace will deal successfully with disorders of the nervous system. Two small twin mollusca shells will avert apoplexy, cure insanity, ulcers, skin diseases and *laziness*, according to the part of the body on which they are worn. A clip from the tail of an antelope keeps the spirits of a patient up to fawn-like pitch. A chip from a cooking pot will stimulate the digestion of anything eaten from it. A feather from the tail of a parrot saves the throat from becoming "parrotty," i.e. raucous. One from a pelican keeps off all the phantoms who are furnished with an extraordinary pelican-like pouch for holding mortals before they are finally despatched. And so on *ad finem*.

The formula of the trade, then, does not follow the line of "a bottle of salts," but of "a berry"; not of a "tonic," but of a talisman; not of a medicine, but of a mascot. Instead of a potion you ask for a peapod. Where you would say "salve" they say "shell," and where you would advise iodine they would stipulate an image.

MARRIED LIFE.

An African's wealth is estimated by the number of his wives, amongst whom there is seldom jealousy, as, the more they are in number, the greater the division of labour.

"Degree" day in the Congo medical profession is equally prolific in fantasy. Qualification consists in the ability to assimilate the trickery of the faculty, as well as to contribute to it some of one's own freaks. The "proctor" orders a whole night dance before the initiation of the "student." She (*kumbi*) is sworn to the profession and restrictions essential to its reputation and dignity. She must never duck her head under water when bathing, or burn roots or rubbish on her fires, or cook black beans, or keep cassava meal in her room, or eat rat and caterpillar, or set water in the presence of *mbola*, her fetish. Chastity is enjoined upon her. Her temples are touched with blood, a song is sung, hands clapped, wine sipped, after which *kumbi* is a fully qualified professional, licensed to trade her traps, perform her tricks, and collect her standard fees. The ordination of male graduates is an identical chimera.

With such a philosophy of medical craft, such medicines, and such craft, the Congolese are in dire need of a philanthropy which will place at their disposal an efficient science and an efficient staff capable of coping with the fearful sufferings of this primitive people.

CHAPTER X

Fetishes & Fetishism

WHAT is fetishism? When Mungo Park escaped from the Arabs of Central Africa he almost died from hunger and exposure. Coming to an unfriendly town he begged for food, which was refused him. He thereupon sought a place where he could lie down and die. As he waited for death an old man came to him and said, "If you will write me a *saphie, to protect me from wicked men*, I will dress you a supper of rice." "That," said the explorer, "was a proposal too momentous for me to give a refusal." He therefore wrote him a *saphie*. A *saphie* is a charm to hang round the neck. The Arabs sometimes wear an article containing parts of the Koran. The old Jewish phylacteries were of a similar use in the form of a parchment upon which were written portions of Old Testament scriptures, and worn on the left arm or on the forehead. Mungo Park wrote the Lord's Prayer on a board both sides from top to bottom, which he handed to his heathen benefactor as a *saphie*. Recognizing that he could not wear the board about his neck, the old Ethiopian got a calabash of water and carefully washed the Lord's Prayer from the board into the vessel. After saying a little ritual over it he drank the powerful draught, then, to ensure he lost not a word, syllable or letter, he licked the board both sides, all over from top to bottom—*to protect him from wicked men*. That is fetishism.

Our opinion is that the old heathen was nearer the truth than he supposed, for if a man can only encompass the

Lord's Prayer in his soul as thoroughly as this African encompassed it in another part of his anatomy, it is indeed a protection not only from wicked men, but against wickedness itself.

An image set in a garden to keep the thieves off or the demons out; mysterious articles to mark off land boundaries or to regulate the affairs of man with man, clan with clan; magic things by which to swear a witness or to sway a sceptre, is fetishism in the realm of ethics. Roots, claws, bones, skins, hairs, etc., fastened on the person to cure or to mitigate a malady, is fetishism in the realm of medicine. The blood of a goat in sacrifice for guilt, its flesh as the medium of communion with the dead, its skin as the mystic element in spirit charming, is fetishism in the realm of theology.

Congo fetishism is a double-barrelled arrangement of charms (*mwangu*), and images (*teke*). An image is a charm, but a charm is not always an image. It is then called *mwangu*. Images among the Ba-Congolese are not idols to be deified, but effigies to ward off aggressive spirits, or to win the favour of friendly spirits. They are more often instruments of revenge to incite the spirits to murder, to maim, or to inflict a malady. A charm may be anything dedicated by a priest for a fetish purpose.

All fetishes have a twofold office, viz. to cure a disease and to cause it. They are able to perform both functions at one and the same time. The theory is, that a man suffering from, say, *lupus* for example, uses the *mbola* fetish for his own recovery and at the same time to inflict it upon the person who, it is believed, has imposed the disease upon him. It is a common sight to see an individual marching through the village with a fetish calling madly upon its tutelaries to smite some foe with a dreadful disorder, against whom also an even more dreadful flood of invective is simultaneously poured forth.

The failure of a charm to perform its task is not, to the Congo mind, a negation of its validity or of its potency, or, indeed, of its necessity, but solely an evidence that some one else has one more powerful. That explains the defeat.

The defect is corrected by obtaining a superior fetish. When a disease is not cured or a curse made effective, it means that the fetish on the opposite side is too vigorous to be overcome. Or the non-success may be attributed to some technical fault on the part of the defeated. The flaw is never on the side of the charm or the creed. So long as the fetish is sufficiently strong and the conduct of the owner is in keeping with the art, there is nothing in the sphere of human need or human iniquity a Congo fetish is not theoretically equal to.

Fetishism touches every phase of the black man's life. It does more. It gathers around him long before he has a separate existence and continues with him long after he has ceased to have a visible existence. It might be said that the negro is conceived in it. It is set in motion concerning him by his mother long before he is born. From the time he is embryo, if not before, until the time he himself becomes a spirit, yea, and for ever after he is the cause of endless rite and sorcery. Magicians conduct him into life, magicians accompany him through life, magicians constantly attend him after life. Whilst on this side of the grave he must be protected from the unscrupulous beings on the other side, and when he himself has joined the majority somebody he has left behind must be protected from him —if his spirit has gone over to the bad—or profoundly respect him if his spirit has joined the good. So whether in the body or out of the body he is either the subject or the object of unbounded superstition.

His charms are his tools with which he carves out for himself the best things he can think of, and with which he

also makes as many obstacles as he likes to throw in the way of those who endeavour to prevent him realizing them.

There is a significant moral element in the fetishism of the Congolese. It is the dogma that fetishes only vindicate the right. Triumph over an opponent is taken as a " proof " that he is wrong and that the victor is right. " Fetishes will never work for a guilty party," says the creed. The Congo phrase is, " *Nkisi kuma kadilanga*," literally; fetishes never justify wrong. That is, a fetish will never injure, or in any way operate against an innocent person. For example, it was found that the people of a certain town were mysteriously losing crops from their gardens. They set a trap to catch the thief. This consisted of certain leaves officially invested with a deadly fetish element which was guaranteed to destroy utterly the culprits when they passed over them. The leaves were strewn along the paths leading to the farms. Those who were not guilty could pass over them without injury. Those who were guilty would be blown to pieces spiritually the first time they set foot on them. Fetish power, whatever it be, will only interfere with those who deserve it. Should the owner make a mistake and set his fetish against one who is not guilty of the thing for which the fetish has been set against him, or if he attempts to harm anyone spitefully, the fetish force invoked will not only not attack the innocent, but will turn and smite its owner with the evils he has sought unjustly to induce in the guiltless. To rid himself of this self-imposed punishment he is compelled to " *nu' e mbozo*," or as we should say, to " eat humble pie " to the spectral authorities.

Before an article becomes a fetish it must be consecrated by a native priest. An image is simply a marketable article until officially ordained. Anyone with skill enough can make an image, but no one except a " wise one " can turn it into a fetish. As an article of manufacture it is nothing

more than a figure which a person may purchase for any purpose he desires. To that purpose, however, it must be ritualistically set apart by the proper officer. As a fetish it is known by the name under which it does business. After the image has been well sprinkled with blood, the priest holds it in both hands, presses it to each breast, makes the sign of the cross (probably a copy of popery), then as he passes it to the owner he sets up a false struggle to beguile the client that mystic power is passing from him by way of the image into its new master, whereby an effective league is instituted between the custodian of the fetish and the beings of the other world who have adopted it as their medium.

Anybody who has acquired a fetish by legitimate means has power to convey its effectiveness to any similar fetish, and to pass over to others as many like fetishes as he desires. This right does not constitute him a " doctor " in the legal sense of the term, any more than a London M.D. whose name, for some reason, is not on the official roll of medical men. He may know as much or even more than the fully accredited " wise man " of the profession, but in the absence of a proper initiation by one of the " wise " he is not a recognized member of the society.

Fetishes may be loaned from one to another, according to prescribed rules. If a man imagines that his particular charm has lost any of its efficiency, or if he thinks that its virtue has diminished, or that it has ceased to interest itself in him as it ought, he can go to a professional and have it renewed (*toma*).

Thus armed with a paraphernalia of stone, iron, wood, chalk, feathers, horns, hoofs, claws, images, and innumerable other trappings equally useless, equally puerile, they frantically battle with their spectral foes.

A bird's-eye view of the chief fetishes in operation will suffice to give a correct conception of the *modus operandi* of

all Congo fetishism, if not of the whole of African fetishism. A close study of the majority of Congo fetishes during the past twelve years has disclosed an identity in their manipulation and manœuvres which can be adequately seen in dealing only with a few.

There is a fetish for almost every conceivable object within the compass of a negro's mind—for hunting, fishing, trapping, gardening, marketing, travelling, trading, playing, living, or dying; things which can make the elements friends or foes, or turn a peaceful citizen into a bird, beast, or creeping thing, or stimulate the birth-rate of a clan, or overthrow it with an epidemic, kill, or create as the need arises.

The *Lukandu* or rain charm, regulates the people's water supply. Drought is its curse. Floods are born of its anger. *Lukandu* in normal temper makes the water courses generous without being offensive, irrigates the crops without swamping them, releases beneficent showers instead of a deluge, and lets the rivers run about the country without bursting their banks, permitting the people to drink, bathe, water the lands and the cattle without the sacrifice of life.

At Koma we were accused of using this charm. Our visit synchronized with a severe drought. The land was parched and split with gaping fissures; food was scarce, and everything seemed to be dying of thirst. Immediately we arrived they frankly charged us with "tying up the clouds," quoting as undeniable evidence that to assist us over the period of drought we had filled our water tanks which stand round the house with the rains of last season. We, of course, could not deny this, for in a land where rain and water are at times uncertain we are compelled to store against a lack of both. We were found guilty and, notwithstanding a strenuous attempt to explain, we had to leave the town.

At Kiungula a woman named Nsiamu was victimized by means of this charm. A man she detested fell in love with her. When he tried to buy her, she, being somewhat enlightened, refused him point-blank. At the time the rains were considerably overdue and appearances promised that they should tarry even longer. The artful fellow conceived a crafty dodge. He procured a rain charm, put it on the roof of her house declaring as he did so that he would not let it rain until she had agreed to marry him. The ruse was opportune. Every woman in the district turned against the girl and boycotted her into a marriage with the rascal.

Nkenge means caretaker. It is an image which when set on duty is placed in a little sentry box at the entrance of the circumcision lodge to keep off all eavesdroppers. It is of great importance to the marriageable public as indicating that the future bridegrooms are faithful to the cult. There is a hole in the stomach of the fetish and another in the crown of its head. These are made to contain the magic element provided by the priest. The one is supposed to hold the "heart," the other to hold the "brain," incidentally showing that fetishism locates the heart in the stomach. To extract the "brain" and the "heart" is to render the fetish impotent very much in the same way as such a process would render anything else impotent. To keep the *Nkenge* in good fettle they spit camwood powder and pepper periodically into its eyes, ears, and joints.

The *Sole* image has a twofold function, one military, one social. Firstly, it defends the town against enemies material and spiritual. It is a protection against warlike mortals and warlike fiends. Whether they come visibly or invisibly the *Sole* magically staves them off. Secondly, it promotes conjugal prosperity. It stands for a large population, hence its great popularity. Every time it

FETISHES.

These Fetishes usually stand in pairs in houses built in the towns. They are the largest the Congolese have. They are valued for their supposed powers of conveying spirit messages. Those on the left are "on duty" in a house.

A Fetish House.

This "shrine" regulates the rainfall, and its sanctity is sufficient to preserve it from inquisitive intrusion. The bar across the doorway renders it perfectly burglar-proof, slight as it may seem.

The Dugout.

Dug-outs are the commonest means of water transport. They are frail and extremely crank, but the natives manage them with poles or paddles with marvellous skill.

registers a success a strand of grass is put about its neck as a sort of laurel. For twins it gets two strands. The one in our possession had an exceptionally successful career before it came into our keeping.

Its neck is choked with laurels, as seems fitting upon its retirement from business. When in proper working order the fetish is believed to be as fully charged with potency as a live battery is charged with electricity. On the one hand it reduces the number of enemies, on the other hand it augments the birth-rate. No foes, and plenty of boys and girls, is an attractive condition to the Congolese. We know an Englishman who has an astounding confidence in a small horseshoe, which he claims to have blessed his family in a similar manner. But that is a "high class" fetishism.

Then there is the *Nkind' evata*, or town policeman, even more popular than the average policeman in Europe. Its place is at the entrance to the town. It is a pot containing the usual odds and ends, set in a tripod formed by slitting the top of a pole which is stuck in the ground. Should misfortune of any kind threaten the social life of the town it provides both the cause and the occasion for establishing the *Nkind' evata*. When the priest has satisfied himself and the people that such a fetish will meet the need, he charges the *Nkinda* pot with various articles of fetish value. The "policeman" proper is an egg of a venerable age, one that is guaranteed to explode on the slightest provocation. When the spirit, or hobgoblin, passes that way into the town its search for prey leads it to investigate the trap, which is to its own undoing. The egg bursts, discharging also the ashes in which it is lying with such exactitude on to the person of the enemy that, even supposing he escapes with his life, it makes such a mess of him that his detection and ultimate capture are absolutely certain. Pepper is judiciously mixed with the ashes, too,

in order to render the charge more disconcerting, the idea being that it will complete the rogue's discomfiture by affecting his sense of smell. Whatever a murderer or a thief does when engaged in his grim task he must not sneeze. If he does so, he is a prisoner or a dead man. The egg method is a very prominent feature in Congo fetishism. We shall meet it again. The way the negro regards it as an effective weapon is even more grotesque than the manner in which it is supposed to achieve the rout of hurtful spirits.

The *Sansa* is the only image with a beard we have seen. It is an ingenious touch of the artist to denote, besides dignity, an experienced commercial ability. It is a fetish which interests itself solely in trade. A beard in Congo, doubtless on account of its rarity, is regarded as a facial decoration denoting great sagacity. It is greatly respected on an old man if his appearance is worthy of it. It is not respected on the chin of an upstart, when mien and whiskers do not agree. It is then spoken of as " a beard on the chin of an idiot." The idea behind it is that as a beard usually stands for experience and wisdom on the part of the man who wears it, so in a fetish it represents a similar fetish shrewdness. It is useless for an inexperienced image to pit its conceit against the sagacity of a grave old *sansa* with a beard. In a sentence, its function is to cheat everybody and see that nobody cheats it. When driving a bargain its position is under the armpit of its master. The parties making a deal simply perform the theatrical part of the drama, but the real agents are the *sansa*. The men are mere marionettes. The *sansa* are the business genii. The images are a sort of board of trade which exists to promote its own trade and ruin that of everyone else.

The *Mpungu* is a bundle of chalk, shingle, grit, crushed stones, and a few feathers. The name means mighty, or. almighty, and it is supposed to do things to justify its title.

Its allies are two images, a male and a female representation, also a huge shell filled with chalk, camwood, pepper, and iron. A *mpungu* priest is generally one of the aristocrats. The price of the fetish is beyond the wealth of a poor man. Its licence and liberties are therefore enjoyed only by a few. The owner of *mpungu* is commonly a rogue of the worst dye. By the time he has made up his mind that he will obtain any thing by means of this fetish he has usually devised the appropriate plan of getting whatever he has set his heart on securing. He takes out his fetish, opens it, touches his face with the dust, ties it up again, tosses it into the air, sets it outside on a rubbish heap, and takes an oath that he will neither eat nor drink until he has procured what he wants. Before he gets that far he has the means of making the things he covets his own, almost at will. We have known the priest fleece one caravan for travelling on a certain road through his town, exact toll from another for permission to pass over it, fine another for trying to avoid it, forbid the pounding of flour at night (the usual time for milling it), so that men arriving in the town late were obliged to buy it from him at his price, claim a tithe of the merchandise which passed his way, and a multitude of other abusive extortions for no other reason than that he possessed *mpungu*. No one dared say him nay on pain of awful consequences attendant on any affront to *mpungu*. The owner can steal with impunity, obtain preferential treatment in trade, go where he likes and do as he likes. So long as he carries the *mpungu* shell about with him, fastened in some conspicuous place about his person, no one will dare to accuse him when he does wrong, or deny him when he asks a favour. The shell is a kind of bomb as well. When he wishes to protect something of his own, or something he has stolen, a bale of rubber for instance, he just pushes the shell into the middle of the stuff and it is believed to be safe. The chalk, pepper, and

iron inside the shell act on the egg principle hypothetically, completely defeating not only the aims of the would-be burglar, but also the burglar himself.

There is a fabulous monster which lives in the clouds. It is known by the name *nzazi*. The fable has it that it descends in the thunderstorms to split and fell trees, burn up houses, distribute skin diseases and to strike dead anybody who happens to be in its way. Its weapon is fire. It burns up everything it touches. There is only one image reputed to have the power to control it. It goes by the same name. It is the most fearful article in the whole array of Congo fetishes. We have seen it beaten with a knife and deliriously adjured in public to flay and skin an enemy after the manner of lightning when it barks a tree. It smites like a thunderbolt, consumes like lightning, devastates like a tropical storm, for thunder, tempest, and lightning are its accomplices.

There is no end to the imagery of the Congo mind in the sphere of fetishism. One image will shoot out from its place on the wall and fasten on to a passing phantom, as the tongue of a lizard will dart out and glue a passing gnat. Another is found armed with a knife to do battle with imps as a swordsman would fight an antagonist with a rapier. Some are most adept with poison, others with a bullet, the particular department in which a fetish is specially skilled being symbolized by some substance tied round its neck. Others are not so dramatic in their duties, but silently, secretly, patiently work out their will on men and devils.

This, then, is the theory of Congo fetishism. It is a hopeless faith, but it is a faith. To the native mind it is not the puerile, senseless creed it appears to an educated mind to be. It is trusted with a fidelity and a sincerity as deeply as other devotees trust superior faiths. It is practised because it is believed in. We once slept in a native

house which might be described as a fetish fort. There were sixteen on the walls and two shrines in the corners. One old figure had his chair, spoon, plate, and knife, and "fed and drank" regularly from the meat bowl and wine cask of the proprietor. That the morsels he placed for the fetish were taken by the rats and other vermin never occurred to his mind.

The biggest image is the *Ekumfu*. The one in our possession stands nearly five feet high and weighs thirty-five pounds. Its use is partly medical, but chiefly phallic.

Cleanliness is evidently not part of the fetish cult. Some of the images are in a most objectionable condition. Clotted blood, grease, grime, powder, etc., formed a layer a quarter of an inch thick on the face of our *nzazi*. It appears to be a mark of respect that they shall be well begrimed. They are never washed, except *wumba*, when a woman is befooling the spirits that the image is her child. Even when cleansed and brought to Europe, African charms never lose their tropical flavour. The majority are not worth trunk room even as curios.

Fetishism is a gospel which leaves the negro more forlorn the more he embraces it. Most of it is inexpressibly absurd. But it is the only hope he has until Christianity supplies him with a better.

CHAPTER XI

Some Useful Applications of Fetishism

IN our contemplation of heathendom and of heathenism we must guard against making at least one mistake: it is the mistake of supposing every heathen to be a cut-throat, a footpad, or a scoundrel. There are good heathens, as well as bad heathens. There are heathens who live up to the light they have, even though it be but the light as of a taper, faint and uncertain; or as the light of a firefly, spasmodic and evanescent; or as the light of a glow-worm, dull and unpretentious.

There are many heathens who live considerably below the standard of their own imperfect ethics. They fail to fulfil such laws as they have. But where is the nation which lives up to the light, natural or revealed, it possesses? Does America? Does Great Britain?

Fetishism, in its lowest form, establishes many customs which very quickly command sufficient authority to guarantee an establishment of law both social and moral. In Congo the customs that count take their origin from fetishism. Indeed, fetishism is the main authority behind them. It not only multiplies them; it maintains them. There is scarcely anything in trade, sport, civic life, law administration, land rights, etc., but that the order which regulates them comes from and, in a large measure, is dependent upon fetishism. It supplies the law *civile* and the law *divinum*. It provides the standard by which one negro deals with his fellow negro. It also yields the rules by which he deals with higher beings. That is where

the negro touches religion. It not only professes to provide the means of detecting the thief and the outlaw, but also the criterion by which they are to be judged as well as the scale of penalties to be inflicted. It stipulates what *ought* and what *ought not* to be done according to fetish standard. To take these away and to leave nothing in their place would be to reduce heathendom to the most hopeless pandemonium of lawlessness and self-destruction.

Congo fetishism has some uses. In the absence of anything better the native would unquestionably be worse off without it. It is a restraint upon transgression as understood and interpreted by fetish law. It superintends the relation of one individual with another, of tribe with tribe, of one chieftainship with that of another.

For instance, some of the heathens would steal crops *ad lib* were there no fetishes to deter them. An image set in a garden will invariably keep off all thieves and robbers. That is a useful effect. It is valuable on the ethical side in that it protects ownership. It is valuable on the religious side in that it staves off a guilt which would inevitably result through acts of stealing, which the absence of fetishes would undoubtedly foster. Candidly, if we had a garden which people were continually robbing night after night, and we had no other means of protecting our cabbages and other things which grew there, except by putting a dolly there, and we found that the presence of a dolly was successful in keeping the rogues off our garden plot, we certainly should set a dolly in it, believing that we should be running no risk of the condemnation or criticism of anyone except those who would not dare to face it.

Of course, we know well that the heathen principle behind the fetish is demonology, a veritable curse which must be eradicated, but so long as the image itself continues to protect the rights of property and ownership, it will be a useful thing until the vile dogma at the bottom of it is

ousted and replaced by the pure light and power of the truth which alone produces genuine respect for the things of others.

A trader applied this principle to protect his money-till and the goods in his store. He found it work successfully, too, where other means had failed. He had come down to the level of a low creed, but it kept the heathens from pilfering his property. A fetish image, therefore, sometimes serves a good purpose in so far as it checks a thief, a liar, a sharper, or a fool. That is solely the native's intention when he puts a figure in his knapsack, his garden or in the corner of his hut, to protect his belongings, his person and his family from knaves material and knaves spiritual. The measure of his success is the measure of the utilitarian usefulness of the creed.

A specific charm tied on the garment of a girl will effectively protect her virginity if she cares to do so. That is of paramount importance. Under no circumstances must the charm be taken away, if so doing would expose that girl to dangers which are all too prevalent in Africa, until we have introduced them to the one and only gospel which not only demonstrates the falsity of the dogma upon which the practice is based, but which establishes the correct standard of mutual respect between the sexes. Honour which through ignorance depends upon a delusion rests upon a frail and fickle thing, but where the sacrifice of the delusion means the sacrifice of the honour, the two must stand together until honour is transferred to its true foundation : truth as contained in the Book of God.

Heathen houses have no bolts or bars, neither padlock nor lever lock, to secure them against trespassers. Here and there one may find a replica of the old wooden Egyptian lock of three or four thousand years ago, but we have not seen one of them in actual use. They are nearly all useless. As a rule the negro has no need to secure his door. He

mostly hitches it with string, or by a rude latch easily manipulated from the outside. However, when occasion arises for a Congolese to guard the interior of his dwelling he has a means of securing it more effectively than if he did it even with a Hobbs' changeable lock. Just in the place where a key would be inserted, or through something answering as a staple, the native passes a few leaves called *nkandu*. When in position they take the name of *nkandikwa*, which means prohibition, or "trespassers will be prosecuted," or "no admittance." No heathen dare enter the house, room, or enclosure at the entrance of which this simple fetish has been placed, under penalty of the most awful affliction. It is forbidden ground, made sacred to the owner, and as such is of undoubted value, although it is enforced by the power or fear of a popular delusion. The cause is wrong, but the effect is right, and for this reason the African will avail himself of the benefit until the relative values of right and wrong have been finally and biblically adjusted. In this we cannot condemn him for ideas which are capable of respecting farms which have no hedgerows, or fences, or boundaries; which have regard for places and property unprotected by shaft, pin, or even a policeman; or which guard the honour of families that cannot boast a yard of cloth between them, are ideas to which we can successfully appeal and which will aid instead of hinder the establishment of the laws of God upon these matters.

We once quite accidentally proved the effectiveness of a charm against extortion. An article we stood greatly in need of was made unobtainable by the excessive price the negro charged for it. The average African is just as ready and anxious to exact things from the white man as some white men are capable of wringing things from the African. There are Shylocks in both camps. The negro in question was one. Upon his second visit to us he found us examining

an image called *Sansa*. Putting the figure under our arm, the particular business position of the fetish, we wheeled round and renewed the bargaining at once. The native was taken by complete surprise. What could he do? He had left his own *Sansa* in the house. He was theoretically helpless. Without the least hesitation, cavil, or fear he laughingly accepted the market price for what he was selling, much to his own glee and to the mirth of his colleagues at the way he had been outwitted. Anything which regulates honesty in business cannot be altogether bad.

Take the philosophy of taboos. Most of them have a direct bearing upon the health of the people. Often in a centre of purest heathenism is found some most striking proviso, the moral quality of which is on a par with some of the best standards in Christendom. In *nkita*, which is one of the darkest traits of one of the darkest communities in Africa, there is a stipulation which is an exact translation of the unknown seventh commandment. Again and again it appears in different branches of fetishism. Of course, it is violated like every other law, but the hopeful thing is that the law is there at all.

The majority of taboos may be absurd and useless, but all taboos are not bad. Many of them are decidedly good, in a utilitarian sense perhaps, but still, minus its sorcerous element a taboo is often beneficial. A native doctor says, " don't do this, don't go there, don't eat such and such," the taboo including the very thing which is at the root of the disease. The patient recovers because, unknowingly maybe, the taboo has hit upon the only remedy for the ailment. Again, the doctor forbids a patient to pass over a " cross road," that includes the doorstep. Now rest is one of the principal items in the treatment of any disease, therefore the very fact that the patient stays in the house in obedience to a simple, sensible taboo, in many cases

means recovery, which, after all, is the main thing. If the taboo is on food, the patient is probably cured of indigestion, scurvy, or some other disagreeable ailment, by a very wise and necessary abstention from meats or herbs which have caused the trouble. Notwithstanding all the witchcraft, magic, sorcery, and fetish buffoonery which we know to accompany taboos, it is certainly a good thing to get rid of dyspepsia and similar enemies.

The stringent laws associated with fetishism have a salutary effect upon the mind of Congo criminals. The penalties they believe to follow, and which often do follow, the breaking of fetish law, are frequently worse than those inflicted by civil authorities. The consciousness of having violated a fetish law and about to suffer the consequences sometimes drives them to despair. We know it is chiefly because of the fear of consequences or the experience of them rather than of any moral pressure, but whatever the cause, the institution of any acceptable form of order, ethical, social, or religious, will serve a good purpose until such time as it can be supplanted by something better.

Fetishism will eventually pass into the general limbo of false things. There is nothing in it capable of rendering it a permanent agent of any satisfactory or final attainment either civil or religious. Its best ingredients may be but accidental or incidental. If it restrains lawlessness it produces no goodness for its own sake. It knows no goodness for the sake of the goodness itself. It is a symbol of hope misplaced and misdirected. Still, having said that, we add, that where a rag blessed by a priest will keep a scoundrel from making a raid upon virtue, where an image will frustrate the designs of a trade sharper, where a twig will keep out the burglar, where a charm will ward off the highwayman, where an injunction will make for sanitation and good health, and where any heathen law will help a man to ap-

proach and keep any law of the unknown God, there is an element of good the usefulness of which is undeniable both as a factor in the upward trend of the negro race and as a ground of appeal in directing the race to nobler, truer, and better things.

CHAPTER XII

Sorcery & Magic

THE stillness which rests at times upon the African jungle is profound. It is as though the whole world slept whilst the "king of heaven" held sway. The sky is a pure blue set with a mighty sphere of brilliance like a globe of molten metal, sending off light quicker than the naked eye can receive it, and heat which smites the traveller two ways, as it radiates and as it rebounds. The surface of the earth is as hot as a well-fired brick kiln, and splits the horny heels of the black man as it blisters the well-shod feet of white men. At 2 p.m. everything seems to be white hot. The feeling in the open is that of being caught in a concentration of heat and light between conjugate foci. The soil glistens like burnished brass and light flies off the dullest objects with an awing charm. Even the cocks cease to crow and the hens to cackle for the sake of panting with open beaks and tongues lolling like the tongue of an overheated dog. The little lizard, which when darting out of the way would at any other time shed its tail from fright, seems comparatively torpid and stupid. Reptiles come out and sleep in the roadway where they can stretch themselves from head to tail. Town pigs seldom come up out of the delightful mud until the atmospheric passion is over. Natives move their mats to the side of the house where the shadow is cast. Caravans stay in the forest until the worst is over. The only being on the wing is the hawk or the eagle, out to snap up any languid rodent or gasping chicken. The only being on foot is he

whose business cannot wait. Africa is most glorious when in siesta.

It was on just such a day and at just such a time of the day that we found Kitokobeni, a large heathen village set in a copse which nestled in a well-like valley surrounded by hills, the peaks of which stood up like the lips of a volcanic crater. We had been attracted to the place by a strange noise which was altogether out of joint with the hour and out of harmony with the outer world. We headed straight through the tall bush dividing it as a diver cleaves the water, drawn by the weird dronings of assembled heathens and impelled forward by a keen sense of the mysterious. Coming out of the gloom of the undergrowth we found ourselves on the brow of a hill. The scene was majestic, solemn, and impressive. From our feet the earth sloped away into a deep dingle, which gathered itself charmingly about the roots of stately palms, graceful ferns, and evergreens of irresistible attraction. Beyond, and on all sides, it rose up again abruptly tier above tier, until it seemed as though it went right into the heavens. The whole panorama scintillated in the light and heat of the meridian sun. But there was just one flaw in the jewelled vista. It was a human blemish; a convocation of heathens holding a court-martial upon a bevy of evil spirits who had been discovered, it was alleged, in the act of assassinating the head chief by inoculating him with malaria.

That mortal man should manifest the traits of a bottomless degradation whilst nature manifested the features of an illimitable glory, and that immortal souls should be bent on such a quest as the apprehension of phantoms whilst the world in which they lived was brimming over with the wonders and excellences of a supreme Intelligence, seemed to us an anomaly incomprehensible.

It was our first introduction to the sorcery and magic of

the Congolese. For a few minutes we stood and watched the throng in the open space below us. As the chanting got into our nerves our breathing involuntarily quickened. We have since ceased to wonder how heathen music blights. It charms before it curses. The drumming and the intonations of the professional magicians drive the passions of the Africans stark raving mad in less than fifteen minutes. Our own heart thumped with an oppressive palpitation as we looked down upon the dancing, yelling, surging, motley crowd. It was a little bit of Hades, for such music, such whirling, such cadence, such witchery could have no other origin.

Suddenly the pandemonium ceased. They had caught a glimpse of a white helmet standing out on the ridge. We at once gave the sign of friendship. Some of the young men recognized us and urged the rabble to follow them as they came to meet us. By this time we were well down the hill towards the town entrance. A grotesque figure had taken the van of the party coming towards us. It was a woman, a little, wrinkled, shrivelled old hag with nothing on but a narrow belt of rag round the loins, which failed to meet on the right hip, the place where a Congo woman's dress should fasten. She was the witch doctress with a face we had seen before in a nightmare. She was painted and feathered after the most approved style of the profession. She literally had "rings on her fingers and bells on her toes," like the fairy of our nursery rhyme. She carried a staff, a sort of wand with which she executed fantastic movements which harmonized with those she performed with her feet. She jigged until we met, when she took us by the hand, stared at us vacantly, and without changing a muscle of her face or altering her tune, turned round and danced us back into the town.

An informative, genial, antique negro whispered to us to be seated, adding that the ceremony would not last long as *she* was now hard on the track of the demons she was

hunting for. Here was a wonderful sight, an aged, infirm, bent, grey-haired, decayed, stiff old woman skipping, leaping, dancing like the proverbial jack-a-lantern. She was devil possessed we veritably believe, for nothing but a demon could make old legs to go at that rate and in that fashion, or hips set with old age apparently to gyrate like a top. As a woman she was scarcely able to hobble about her farm. As a magician she jumped like a hart and whirled round at a velocity which made one unaccustomed to the sight of such motion giddy to look at. At the end of one of her gyratory feats she fell like a log to the ground. The thud of her fall was perfectly timed with the clap of every hand and a yell from every throat. There she lay, all her length, twitching and foaming like one paralysed and demented, in a way that would have confirmed even Origen and his colleagues in their supposition of the alliance between epilepsy, lunacy, and indwelling demons.

Then the uproar subsided as if by magic. An eerie silence supervened which made the skin of the scalp feel tight and sent a tingling running down the spine. What a sight! A circle of excited savages waiting for the doom of demons, with the chief medium lying in a swoon gathering evidence together for the impeachment, leave an impression upon the mind which is seldom erased. What a tension! It ran through the throng like shocks of electricity. Big black eyes set in white, blood-shot, stood well out of every head. The tree tops were alive with people craning their necks for the next move. Someone touched the nose of the prostrate witch doctress with a feather of diabolic fame, tied on the end of a long grass stem like a cane. She was on her feet with a bound, rushing wildly about the circle evidently in search of something or someone. She grabbed an old flint-lock gun from the hand of a warrior, peered down the barrel, and after a moment's pause shouted out something in a high-pitched voice which

set the crowd agog with frenzy and disorder. It was a gleeful sort of disorder which infected everybody. We were informed that in looking down the gun-barrel she had discovered the witch. So convinced was the old medium that she had made a notable capture that she handed the gun to us to prove it for ourselves. We looked down the bore as a matter of course, but the old lady would not believe us when we protested that we could see nothing of the sort she imagined to be there. We were the only sceptical party present. The delusion meant death to somebody, for in Mbamba they took the short method with their victims of sorcery. But the professional refused to convict in our presence. She dismissed the multitude with a promise to *tuba*, declare the witch, after we had gone. She then retired to a hut, where she sat in solitude babbling the mysteries of her occult science. Her audience withdrew to a dance organized to pass the time away and to maintain the excitement until the final. A few stayed with us out of curiosity, until we departed.

For a while we found ourselves dumbfounded. We had witnessed the pseudo-art of Congo sorcery and magic, and our feelings tingled with the effects of it. We had heard the songs, the drumming, the applause which lead the Africans into the main thoroughfares of perdition. We had seen the dance of the witch priestess whereby familiar spirits are enthralled and influenced according to the creed. We had been a witness to the way the pagan magi profess to obtain a mastery over the secrets of the unseen world as well as over the inhabitants of it.

Our next business was to enquire the cause of the phenomena. The chief was dying and they had resolved to discover the demon-possessed beings who were responsible for it. We were conducted to the presence of the chief, whom we found to be dying of malarial hyperpyrexia, or high fever. He was beyond human aid, but he died in

the confidence that his " murderers " were discovered and would be duly requited. We heard nothing more about the matter as relating to the accused, which is generally the limit of our knowledge of the more serious events of Congo life, unless we accidentally come upon them.

Congo sorcery and magic, then, take us right into the heart of professionalism. It is the department of the experts. The sphere of fetishes and charms specially belongs to the common people. Anybody and everybody may possess and successfully use a fetish without even understanding the principle upon which it is supposed to do its work. It is the instrument of the common priesthood, of all who believe in it. Professional men, of course, confer the fetishes. They trade them and perpetuate their reputation for doing occult things, but they are within the reach of all.

Sorcery and magic are the monopoly of the " wise ones," who arrogate to themselves the entire credit of mastery over the mysteries of the nether world. Charms and images may still be the media, but their management is solely under the control of experts in the black art whose sleight-of-hand performances and unusual trickery are beyond the vision of the general public. For the most part, however, it is conducted without fetishes, embracing more of an abstract theurgy, including nearly every species of divination, witchcraft, and vanderie.

The native mind is more occupied, more influenced by superstition than by anything else which touches the black man's life. His birth, his childhood, his adolescence, his manhood, his old age, his death—yea everything pertaining to him before life, in life, after life, is thought to be determined and governed by sorcerers who alone are reputed to know the science of producing effects by superhuman means.

There is a magic number invested with peculiar divinatory

qualities, like the magic square of the Chinese, Egyptians, and Hindus. It is the number three, or a multiple of three. It is a number as sacred to the magic art of the Congolese as seven used to be among the Hebrews, Greeks, Romans, and the Indians. Three times an inferior touches his temples with dust when approaching a superior. A religious ceremony is performed three times. Three times a song is sung. Three times an oath is taken. Charms go in threes; three seeds for smallpox, three scales for skin disease, three beans for rheumatism, three shells, three crooked twigs, three fruit stones, a nut with three kernels, three beads, three leaves, and so on right through the whole realm of fetishism and in every part of it. In every formality three signs appear, and there is never anything outside the power of three. Taboo is removed by a threefold rite, *sukula*. An invalid's bath contains three mysterious ingredients. To revive a fetish three or nine little heaps of gunpowder are fired. A pot is set on three fire stones. A priest's emoluments are paid in threes. Three or any power of three is the enigmatical number of Congo mythology.

Sacred literature presents similar study which has a peculiar attraction to the heathen mind when it comes to know it. The butler dreamed of three vine branches, and the baker of three baskets. Moses was hidden for three months. There were three feasts in the Jewish year. In connection with the tabernacle three is the predominant number; pillars, shekels, cubits, the branches of the candlesticks, etc., went in threes. Under Levitical law purification lasted thirty-three days for a male and sixty-six days for a female. Gideon's army was reduced to three companies, totalling three hundred. Jonathan shot three arrows. Joab thrust three darts into the heart of Absalom. The beams in Solomon's house were in rows of fifteen each. The windows were in three rows, and the lights

were in three ranks. His " molten sea " stood on twelve oxen, three facing each point of the compass. His burnt offering was made three times a year. He made three hundred shields and put three pounds of gold in each. The Seraphim had six wings. Their song was a " thrice holy " to the Lord. Elijah stretched himself three times over the child at Zarephath. Daniel prayed three times a day. There are three persons in the Godhead. Peter denied the Lord thrice. Jesus prayed three times in the garden. He was three times tempted by the devil. It was on the third day that He rose from the dead.

Is the magic number in Congo sorcery a remnant of something which has filtered down from the north and which has lost its original meaning in the meshes of heathen degradation and superstition? That is a question for the experts. Symbolism is one of the most important features of the order in Congoland and the most fraught with mystery and magic.

As always and everywhere sorcery presents an infinite sphere to any impudent charlatan bent on reaping a rich harvest by pretence to possession of occult powers. African magi go one better than the European priests who assumed to themselves the power of turning disobedient Christians into hares or some other four-footed creature, by turning heathens into nothingness, or, in other words, by rendering them invisible. They claim to have a most potent charm called *ebunze*, delivered to them by the beings of the lower world, by which they can make negroes of the largest corporeal dimensions as invisible as a corpse-candle. The charm has no existence outside imagination, for it is of such a nature that it cannot be represented by the ordinary symbols of African fetishism. No one has seen it. No one can see it. It is itself invisible, wherein lies its mystery and awe. When it is used as a weapon, victims are changed into thin air and they vanish. That is a fate which

no heathen cares to meet, so they live in dread of *ebunze*. As an ally the fetish is of great service to bad men. It means that a rogue can enter a house and ransack it of all its valuables whilst the whole family are sitting at the fire quite unconscious that they are being robbed. In war a warrior can stand up to his enemy without being seen, and can blow out his opponent's brains before he is aware of being in danger. In the same way a scoundrel may be an unseen guest at every conclave, an invisible partner in every raid, or an imperceptible confederate in all matters which appeal to his criminal soul. All he has to do is to announce that he has *ebunze*, and give evidence that he has a cleverness and rascality to match his audacity when he will leap to fame as a magician respected and revered. It is a delusion which creates unbounded fear on the one hand and unbounded covetousness on the other, a fable which commands the two classes of Congo society which gather around the superstition; those who dread its mysteries, and those who court the licence which those mysteries are supposed to confer upon them.

There is a twin myth known by the name *Ezau*, equally abusive and equally imaginary. It is credited with bestowing an endowment for mystic practices which enrich one's own farms at the expense of the farms of others. It works in this way. Suppose you had a garden better than our garden, with potatoes, beans, cabbages, plums, etc., better, bigger, sweeter, and more plentiful than they were in our allotment, we could, if we possessed the *ezau* charm, command your produce to come out of your garden into our garden, and the plums to come off your plum tree and grow on our plum tree without you in any way being conscious of your loss. The transference is performed invisibly. As far as appearances are concerned your plums, cabbages, and the rest of the yield will remain the same, but in reality they are only the worthless remains (*efwafwa*,

kafi) of the fruit and vegetables, because we have magically stolen their "soul," which, according to animism, is the only valuable part of matter (*v.* Chapter XVIII).

If it be a question of richer soil we just send a boy to take a little from each angle of your garden whereupon the whole of its valuable deposits, in which its fertility is contained, follow the stolen pinches of earth as completely as a sheet follows its own corners. Your loss is our gain which we obtain as soon as the soil is thrown on to our plot of land. Such magic at least equals that of the goblin crew which did the bidding of Hekatê, the patron divinity of the Greek sorcerers.

Sometimes Congo magicians profess to read the fortune and future of clients, for which purpose they have a little figure with a glass stomach. In war they will tell a man which side to fight on for safety, or that the only way to avoid death is by staying away from the fight. In any question of danger, doubt, or difficulty, they look into the glass stomach for the solution of it. It is a clairvoyance in which a negro imagines he has an effective key to the fortune and destiny of all.

Exorcism is practised in the orthodox style with mesmeric actions and control. But there are many methods in vogue for getting rid of devils. We have known the native turn round and discharge the contents of his gun into the stump of a tree over which he had stumbled, then go on his way under the impression that he had blown the demon out of it, who had, so he believed, got into it with the sole intent of tripping him up as he went by. We have seen them in the act of casting out demons, as they supposed, by the aid of wine, images, and oaths. At other times they set traps to catch them as we would catch mice, beetles, and flies.

The art of Congo sorcery and magic perhaps culminates in its bold claim, in certain circumstances to a mastery

over the cause, curse, and power of death. *Lufwalakazi* is the rite by which a young widow may secure her future husband against death and herself against another widowhood. Again, the " wise ones " provide the science as well as the ritual. Where the body of her late husband has lain for months, perhaps for years, and consequently which is the rendezvous of multitudes of vermin, parasites, and other living things, there the girl must lie as soon as the body is removed. Her coverlet is of leaves which sting and bite like the maggots which come up through the ground and the insects which return at nightfall to the remaining spices of decomposition. At the end of her term of penance, which may last for several years, the leaves are buried, indicating the conclusion of her profound sorrow and atonement. She selects a healthy child, carries it to a palm where she has previously buried her grief, together with her bed, and asks the strong, healthy tree to give her a husband like itself in strength and stamina and children of a quality like the one on her back. She receives absolution at the hands of the sorcerer. Clippings of her hair and finger-nails are buried together. A root of extreme bitterness is employed to exorcise her evil spirits who really are the *raison d'être* of her widowhood. She is then painted over with red ochre mixed with palm oil as a sign that she has completed *lufwalakazi* and is now ready to marry the first bridegroom that comes along, whom, according to the creed, she has secured against death. How it is done is a mystery even to the Congo mind, but the mystery is the sorcery, which is the province of those who pretend to have intercourse with familiar spirits.

There is no limit to the delusions of the Congolese, no boundary to the pretensions of the Congo mind in the realm of sorcery and magic.

CHAPTER XIII

Spiritism and Necromancy

AMONG nearly all peoples of the world, and in all ages of time, there has been a desire to hold communication with the spirits of the dead. Peoples civilized and uncivilized, heathen and Christian, have ever furnished some class of persons who claim to command an intimacy with the spirits of the departed. It is an art both ancient and modern varying in form and "manifestation" from the time mediums turned rods into serpents in Pharaoh's day to the turning of tables by supernatural agency in our day. For a creed so hoary with old age, and considering the attentions devoted to it by nearly all races, that it can give us nothing better than bad grammar, bad spelling and a "jargon of incomprehensible mysticism," is somewhat of a shock to all who believe in progress. Congo provides us with the real thing in spiritism and necromancy. It is the heathen's delight as well as his fear.

Ghosts are real things to the Congo people. They dwell in the rivers, the swamps, the forests. They haunt the great chasms where the water rushes. Every nook and cranny the contour of the country offers, the Congo mind has peopled with demons, elves, and the undying, disembodied part of mankind. They travel at night, carry mysterious lights, destroy farms, steal the nuts from the town granaries, scatter disease and famine among the cattle and people, bewitch children in their sleep, impart gifts of divination, skill and other gratuities to whomsoever

ROPE MAKING.

This is a busy craft. The skin of vines is stripped off, dried, and twisted into serviceable twine. It makes good hand-cuffs, cargo rope, door "locks," and so forth. They are sold at twenty for two penee.

ZOMBO FETISH.

The " lion catcher " is installed in a corner of the room and is supposed to shoot out and catch any passing spirit with the rapidity of a chameleon's tongue getting a fly.

A LESSON IN ARTS AND CRAFTS.

Plaiting and weaving is among the fine arts of these people, especially that of the pattern variety.

they favour, or deliver up to sorrow, persecution, or death, any victim they will. These beliefs are the common master, the absolute master of the Congo mind. A man suddenly disappears; evil spirits have devoured him. A hunter develops an unsteady aim with the gun; an evil spirit has paralysed his prowess in shooting. A man is worsted in a bargain; his patron spirit has forsaken him. Somebody gets the nightmare; it is a demon attempting to suffocate him (*fina*).

It is the normal condition of the mind of the untaught Congolese. He is the dupe of delusions he believes to be real, of fancies he considers to be actualities. Nobody is safe from the beings of the nether world. They may meet a man in the highway and gobble him up without ceremony. They may meet a woman at the watering-place and adulterate the beverage of a whole family or clan. A child playing in the garden may lose its soul in a trice and nobody be the wiser until it sickens and dies. A married woman may lose her unborn baby if she leaves one moment unguarded. A bather runs the risk of being swallowed alive by the nixies if he is not careful in his behaviour towards them. A hunter is himself hunted by hosts of demons thirsting for his blood. Should he not return from the chase everyone guesses the way he has gone. An evil person may encounter any law-abiding subject in the form of a goat, a pig, a crocodile, a hawk. Supernatural beings may be feathered or hoofed, biped or quadruped, with a tail or without a tail, in any form or with no form at all. Against these imaginary evils the native makes a strenuous fight in which he brings into play his elaborate assemblage of charms and fetishes. There is not one negro in the dark "continent" outside Christendom, who does not believe himself beset by legions of airy creatures, and who is not heartily a subscriber to the popular theory of these delusions.

All fetish priests are believed to be in touch with the spirit world, each is a specialist in his own special department and in no other. Their spirit world seems to be a rascally set aiming at nothing good as a rule. Some of the beings can be cajoled and coaxed into doing something acceptable provided the devotees can make it worth their while. But for the most part, judging from the general tendency of their fetish practices, the spirits exercise a determined antagonism to Congo people. The enmity appears to be against humanity generally, but against Congolese specifically. This is not true of all spirits because they are not all bad. There are dæmons *and* demons in Congo spiritism. Those of them who are spiteful to human mortals are either devils or disembodied knaves, who, when in the flesh, were the scamps and rogues of the community. Apparently there is very little cohesion among them, for, according to the creed, one party may be set against another party in the interests of their particular wards, neither party being effective logically because they negative each other. Thus the Congo native, in his own mind, has the spirit world fairly well organized. Naturally it is a copy of his own social order. That the spirits should do business on negro lines is perhaps the most natural product of the delusion.

Judging from the nature, number, purpose, and application of their fetishes, the abode of spirits contains a society of no mean order. There is what, for convenience, we may call a Scotland Yard department which exists to give the criminal his just due. There is a Red Cross and Medical department to deal with the mishaps, aches, and pains of humanity. There is the judicial department which fines and flays sometimes on the "Star Chamber" system, or after the example of the Inquisition, but more often according to the worst conceivable absolutism. There is a kind of freemasonry section so secret that even the "master"

himself cannot penetrate it. There is the trading party, the sporting party, in fact, there is a party of spirits for every purpose which lies within the compass of native thought. They give the black man tips on good business. They turn animals towards the muzzle of his guns. They soothe his sorrows, inspire his hopes, secure his conjugal happiness, or vice versa. They are worth time, devotion, and expense to him because they fill his home with little feet, make his wives' crops grow in the garden, fill his fish traps with food, his palm trees with wine, act as body-guard, and perform innumerable other welcome favours for which he is always prepared to stake high. That is the basis of his spiritism.

Originally the word used to denote the worst kind of evil spirit known to, or imagined by the native mind was *ndoki*, which means wizard or witch. A witch is a person who had become a fiend incarnate, an embodiment of an evil spirit, the most active, the most malignant of all spirits, a demon in human flesh, a medium of the devil, the most violent and the most hated of his agents. What it is exactly that takes possession of the witch is not known beyond that it is some ghoul which may be of the order of demons or of the order of human souls eternally lost. It is most certainly a demoniacal possession. The commonest opinion is that it is the man's own soul placed at the disposal of the devil or of one of his colleagues mainly for three evil purposes: disease, death, and slavery. The sole work of the witch is to cause sickness and death, which is done by drawing off the soul of the victim. That soul or spirit is then sold to white men who hide them in their travelling-trunks, water-tanks, salmon tins, etc., until they are able to despatch them to Europe, or to the bottom of the sea, or to some other equally secure place far away where they spin cotton and weave cloth for their new taskmasters. The wizard has sold himself body and soul to the powers of

darkness much in the same way as sorcerers, magicians, and mediums have done in most countries. They are called by the Congolese, *akwa fuku*, that is, beings of the night, and are said to have " a heart utterly depraved." A witch or a wizard then is a human personification of a demon or demons who can take possession of a person even against his will. Such persons are to be killed, says Congo law, whenever mortal hands can be laid upon them, because it is the only effective way of checking those demons whose sole object in the world is to destroy life.

The idea of a supreme demon is a natural result of the mental process of the heathen mind which dwells upon the subject of evil spirits. Demonology is bound sooner or later to produce a prince of devils. In Congoland he is called *nkadi ampemba*. The root meaning of the word *nkadi* indicates the bitterest, the most extremely nasty, distasteful, objectionable something conceivable. It is a word which brings us down to the most disagreeable qualities imaginable. *Mpemba* means white, and in this connection stands for absolutely the last thing in badness. It is the superlative for evil. He is a " white devil," a phrase which stands at the extreme limits of the Congo vocabulary for evil things and beings. Together we have *nkadi ampemba*, a devil of the utmost bitterness and malignity. He is the one being with whom the Congolese dare not try conclusions. He is the chief of the " beings of the night."

A glimpse of the devil's nature, as conceived by the natives, may be had from the common uses to which the name is often put. A goat, for instance, bigger, more shaggy, with exceptionally long horns, which no native fence can hold in bounds, which makes every other goat of its own persuasion take an inferior position in the herd, and which wantonly makes havoc in the farms of peaceful citizens is called *nkadi ampemba*. A cloth which defies

the roughest wear and tear, which lasts longer than even the patience of the negro, a cloth which is specially adaptable to dirty work and which clings to one as long as there is a thread to cling, is called the " skin of the devil." A foreign grass, the roots of which persist in running in every direction, smothering stones, roots, and every other obstacle in its way, against which even the tallest native growth cannot stand, a grass which, when it gets hold cannot be got rid of except at great cost and labour, is called devil grass.

The devil is the demon who perverts (*bendomona*) the hearts of men causing them to curse, lie, swear, steal, commit adultery, and so forth. A boy whose mischief takes the form of injury to the body of another is called " child of a witch." A boy whose mind is not right morally or mentally (*zayi*), a boy given to lies, oaths, disobedience, thieving, and other perverse actions is a " child of the devil." It is in such a world of demons, controlled by the prince of demons, that the African negro lives a hard life of continual conflict, dread, suspicion, and horror. It is a spiritism which turns the heart into a pandemonium and the mind into a bedlam.

In his necromancy we see the negro in touch with his departed friends, the *amvumbi y'ampembe*, or the good and innocent dead. We found it first at Kutu, a town of evil repute, where they abandoned three souls in a month, leaving them to die of a painful disease, the result of witchcraft. They threw the bodies out on to the plain as food for the jackals and leopards. In the middle of Kutu stood a fetish house containing two wooden images of large dimensions and hideous designs. The dead were believed to come and lodge in the images whenever they visited the town, either on their own initiative or when conjured to do so by a priest. On this occasion there had been a theft. The priest was called to consult the dead

about it, which he did in due and ancient form, coming out of the fetish house with detailed information of a startling nature purporting to be from the underworld, but which in reality was the result of a cautious, previous investigation. His information may be correct, but it is often wrong. Yet no one dare question or test the accuracy of his knowledge, because the dead who are believed to supply it, are their own kith and kin who have " passed over " to be their infallible, non-vindictive, friendly, guardian spirits.

These " dead houses " are dotted about the country like shrines in a Roman Catholic land. There is always a male and a female figure represented in them, hateful in their phallic features. They are places where the most awful crimes are conceived, planned, and matured under cover, protection, and patronage of the " innocent dead." No one but the priests enter these unholy of unholies. They are the necromantic Virgil from which the mediums never come without carrying out some " virgilian lot " with them.

When business crops up in a neighbourhood minus one of these altars the priest betakes himself to the forest, " the country of the dead," instead of conjuring them to meet him on the spot. He does this for convenience and not of necessity because he is supposed to be able to communicate with the dead in any place and at any time either by mesmerising himself, producing self-hysteria, faintings, or fits, as the case may be, which, by the way, appears to be the only condition to which the spirits can make a communication, and the only condition in which a spirit message can be received, judging from the prevalence of the fantasy. It is a psychic phenomenon too repulsive to command the respect of an enlightened mind.

But Congo necromancy embraces a wider sphere. It is of considerable importance to the student of native life

because it furnishes some of the principal examples of the African at prayers. It is a phase in which the cult receives the assent of the general public and in which the community takes part *on the knees*. One of the oldest women we know one day remarked to us, that "We never pray to God because we do not know Him, but we pray to leaves, fetishes, and to the DEAD." Prayer is offered to the dead at certain seasons. The requests range fairly well over the whole field of negro need; the direction of a bullet to kill an enemy or a beast, the effectiveness or ineffectiveness of a poison or a drug, the death or the recovery of a sick person, the acquisition of wealth, food, favour, skill, or whatever one supposes can be obtained for the asking. The practice had its rise in fetishism and is to-day inseparable from it.

In prayer to the dead there is a special formula. The priest calls the attention of the departed by rattling a *nzazu* (*cassia fistula*). It is the long seed-pod of a lliana. When the seeds are dry they can be made to rattle like hard peas in a paper packet. When the spirits are supposed to be assembled they are addressed thus: "Oh, good and innocent dead hear us (*toyo*); you are blind, but you are not deaf. . . ." Then follow the petitions which have been previously arranged between the priest and the people. Sometimes a whole morning is occupied thus.

In the reign of Dom Henrique Nteyekenge, when General L. was "resident," the king prayed publicly. The Government required labourers and the authorities took advantage of the necessity by enlisting all the undesirables in the district, of whom there were at that time a large number. When the king's embassy came to *Nkonko* they were received with a volley of gun-fire. At that the king became furious. He mobilized his army to march against them. Before setting off to the attack the king led his warriors in a body to the graves of his predecessors, and there, on their knees, at the chief tomb in the royal mauso-

leum he prayed for the success of his arms against the insurgents, very much as they pray for victory against the denizens of the forests. To see a whole clan of heathens on their knees at a graveside or in a cemetery holding communication with the dead, led by a professional necromancer, is one of the most impressive sights seen in African heathenism.

For the main part the art is " black." The medium is a typical picture of the fabled witch standing over her cauldron. The very phraseology of the craft sends a shaft of dread into every timorous soul. The " country of the dead " is where disembodied spirits flit about in the form of owls, bats, vampires, and phantoms, consequently it is a place frequented only by those priests believed to be in league with them.

We know one commoner who braved his fears for a glimpse of the land of spirits. It was his first and only visit. He followed the wizard through the forest gloom quaking with every step he took. He saw the mystic enter a clearing in the trees which struck damp and fearsome. When he realized that it was the place where the witches were executed he became as though petrified. The movements of the agent completed his discomfiture. He saw the wizard take three human skulls and make a tripod of them. Upon the tripod he set a pot containing fowl, the usual diet of a " dead offering." Under the pot he kindled a fire with human bones as fuel. He then sat over the pot with his head between his knees, a position only modified now and again as he moved to push a rib or a humerus at intervals into the blaze. When the food was cooked, and before eating, he took out four portions which he threw to the four quarters of the compass for the benefit of the spirits supposed to be on the look out for such tasty snacks. For the next half-hour he did his best to satisfy his own appetite. Incantations followed which he con-

cluded by putting a little of the bone ash into his charm bundle. He then made off in the direction of the town, presumably surcharged with a new commission from the "beyond." It was enough for Manuel, whose nerves were at breaking-point, for he vowed there and then never again to pry into dead men's affairs, which is rather a sensible resolve for either heathen or saint.

CHAPTER XIV

Native Slavery

NATIVE slavery is not what the word has come to connote in European tongues. When Congo slavery of to-day is spoken of, the memory of events of recent years in certain parts of that continent at once cause the mind to conjure up to itself a series of atrocities perpetrated by state soldiery upon a defenceless people driven to distant lands as in the days of Thomas Clarkson, or driven to seek rubber in the sunless thickets of tropical forests as in the days of Leopold II. But that is not the domestic slavery of the Ba-Congolese.

Maybe the term slavery brings to the imagination long caravans of weary, exhausted captives, yoked together, some bleeding, some dying, escorted by ferocious beings of their own colour, with chicotes or rifles as inducements to obedience and quick travel, acting under the direction of tyrants of another colour whose god is mammon. But that is not native slavery. That is the enslavement of the native by the foreigner, which is a very different matter. The African method is neither as sordid nor as criminal. It is a question whether the native systems ever were as diabolical as those the white men have made use of. We know that some African tribes have used their slaves for funeral purposes, even to burying them alive with their deceased masters, but fearful as it is, it is rather a religious observance than a deliberate act of premeditated wickedness. Human victims have been sacrificed in many lands to satisfy the religious notions of the pagans, heathens,

and barbarians of those lands. Arabs have been guilty of the worst excesses in their slave raids among their neighbours, but they are more akin to the banditti of Southern Europe than to the negro of Africa.

Even in their own local organizations there have doubtless been, and still are, bad masters in every tribe that has practised slavery or that still practises it. In nearly every race of men there may be found those who are prepared for a consideration to exploit their own people. Such beings will aid any raid that may crop up even though it means a far worse slavery for their fellows than that of the institution established among themselves. It brings them into an indescribable serfdom where misery, starvation, and death invariably follow, but it is a slavery of quite a different brand from the one we speak of.

There are four forms of native slavery: that of purchase, that of pawning, that of free-will, and that of crime. Let it be remembered that against any form of native slavery present day Governments are dead set. To punish it, however, a Government first has to find it, and it is no more successful in this direction than it is in detecting what is criminal in native superstitions.

Kidnapping is associated with the first form. Ndombasi, one of the most trustworthy natives of our acquaintance, was abducted when a child and sold into slavery. He was born at Kinioka, near the Congo-Belge border, in the neighbourhood of the junction of the Efidi and the Evinga Rivers. He was stolen by a man named Kabwiku. This man had married one of his relatives to Kialakiamatuti. Another of Kabwiku's relatives died of a strange disease at Koma, their native town. The witch doctor was employed. He condemned Kialakiamatuti. It was a judgment which placed the responsibility of killing him upon Kabwiku who, naturally, did not want to kill the husband of his own relative. He tried another method,

which involved the liberty of little Ndombasi. Kialaki-amatuti's wife brought the boy to Koma. From there they sold him to Zuze Mbeketi, of Lungezi, for 240 francs. Kabwiku's object was to create trouble between Kialaki-amatuti and Ndombasi's people, thus successfully to get the man into severe trouble without appearing as the author of it. What became of Kialakiamatuti we do not know, but unfortunately it cost the boy his liberty. His master turned out to be a good fellow. He treated little Ndombasi as his own child, who, being well cared for, has become one of the best known men in Congo society.

Seldom will a native sell his own child. He will more readily sell a more distant relative. He will sell his child too if and when the child is condemned as a witch. Indeed, it is an alternative of death which a witch doctor may insist upon, or which the headmen may decide upon. This is how old Neyakala lost her sister. The same authorities disposed of a toddling baby in the same way. Other children have been ambushed, carried off, and sold, thus being lost for ever to their own people. We do not suggest the wholesale carrying off of victims, such as has been done by traders who have sent the riff-raff of one tribe to distant tribes to carry off the weak for a further exploitation by far-off despots. No doubt some of the victims of witch-craft and kidnapping have come by such a fate, but the object is not to make slaves, but to get rid of dangerous beings, or to vent a petty spite against undesirable neighbours. Fortunately the practice of selling or of kidnapping is not pursued on a very large scale.

The method of pawning is an expedient which answers to needs similar to those satisfied by pawning clothes, jewellery, etc., in England and elsewhere. When a man is in need of money, he will pledge his child to get it. When he is in debt, and the money is called in at a time he cannot meet it, he will pledge his girl or boy for the amount

to discharge it. We have known a boy pledged to his own father in this way. It is explained by the fact that authority over a boy or girl is usually with the maternal uncle, never with the father. The father in this case received this extra authority over his own child from his brother-in-law in lieu of a debt which the latter was not able to settle otherwise. It may happen that a person thus pawned finds himself passed over from owner to owner, as each one seeks to realize the money represented. The pledge of course is redeemable, so that the condition may be but temporary. Generally the lot of this kind of slave is not intolerable. There are sometimes unfortunate cases. They are made to work hard, and to carry heavy loads in order to bring money and ease to their masters. They are poorly fed and poorly clothed. This was the fate of little Mavovwa, who died at Lunzimba as the result of ill-treatment. When his "father," chief of Nkiendi, went to redeem him he was beyond redemption.

There is always a danger of the interest charged mounting up until it becomes impossible to ransom a slave. In such a case it means slavery for life, which may or may not bring to the unfortunate victim much sorrow and suffering. Should he pass into the hands of an owner of another clan, or of another country, then the likelihood is that he will undergo the common lot of African slaves. So long as he is able to remain in his own country among his own people, he may not meet with much distress consequent upon his condition. We have known them to enjoy full liberty, with nothing to remind them of the fact of their slavery save the loss of their civic functions and rights.

We have read of criminals at home stating that they are better off in prison than outside it. A convict from Lorenzo Marquez, banished to the West Coast for murder, told us that he would rather be as he was than free. He believed himself to be falsely accused. Clever, intelligent,

a first-rate telegraphist, much above the average native in every way, able in civil life to command the maximum wage, yet convinced that he was better off in the keeping of the authorities than he would be in freedom, with the awful stigma of murder clinging to him. Probably he was right. Be that as it may, he certainly kept himself versed in a list of offences calculated to destroy his chances of obtaining the liberty which the laws of his country hold out to assassins.

In the same way some natives prefer slavery. A man thinks he will be better off owned by someone he likes than if left alone to himself. He would be better provided for. He would be protected from something or someone from which or from whom he is unable to protect himself. The act of making oneself the slave of another is called " eating the goat." The last case to happen in San Salvador was in the time of Snr. França, about 1892. A native of Mbamba came and " ate the goat " to a man named Lema, brother of Maria Nkayi, a station girl. When Lema fired his guns to mark the occasion, according to custom, which took place about seven o'clock in the evening, he called the police on his track. He fled. The would-be slave was sentenced to three months' imprisonment.

Slavery is also brought about in another way. The volunteer slave comes to the town of the man he wants to make his master, and accuses him of being a wizard. By doing so he has " eaten the goat." He has been guilty of an unpardonable crime. The penalty he pays is his freedom.

The lakes of Congoland are owned by the people who are the first to build a town near them. From that time on they are inherited by the nephews in line. These lakes abound in fish. Anyone guilty of fishing in them without the permission of the owner, becomes by law, the slave of

that man, and not only those caught in the act of stealing the fish, but anyone found taking water from the lake. The latter is the act of *somona*, which we deal with fully in Chapter XVIII. This form of slavery is known as *Kindongo*, and involves not only the actual culprit, but the whole family. They all become the property of the owner of the lake, both parties paying slaves to their chiefs, that is, the relatives of the family enslaved, and the one who obtains the slaves, as a gratuity and honour to their head men.

Another crime which incurs slavery is connected with marriage. Should a man fail to notify in due time the illness, death, or any other serious happening to his wife or to his children, to her relatives, he thereby forfeits his freedom to them. A Congo husband seems to possess unlimited licence in other directions concerning his wives, but he is held responsible for their physical welfare so long as he retains them as his wives. He may send them back home, sue them, loan them to another man, work them like beasts of burden, but it is incumbent upon him that he keep their relatives well informed of their health and of the health of their children. It is in his own interests too, apart from the likelihood of enslaving himself. He runs the risk of being accused of their illness or of their death. He may be condemned as the *ndoki* (wizard). This actually was the case with Mpululu za mwini, who fled to us for protection. He is a native of Kindundu, the largest, most populated, and most heathen district we know on the lower river. His wife was taken ill just as he was about to start for the coast in the service of a white officer. Before setting off he gave the chief money with instructions to her relatives, so that they would attend to her in his absence. When he returned he found his wife had died. The relatives had refused the money. Mpululu was caught, tied, and led

off to the woman's clan among the hills where he was condemned to death. One night he succeeded in making his escape, when he at once made his way to us for protection.

That is the attitude of the Ba-Congo people to the question of slavery among themselves.

CHAPTER XV

Native Priestcraft

AFRICAN fetishism has created a most remarkable priesthood. Its ramifications leave no section of society untouched. Wherever there is a layman there is bound to be a cleric. There is a quack for every qualm, a pretender for every purpose. For physical needs there is a complement of medicine men, and for needs spiritual there is a corresponding bevy of spiritualists. There are professionals to deal with bad spirits, and others to deal with good; mediators to treat between beings terrestrial and celestial, or infernal. The pretensions of this priesthood stretch to the farthermost limits of fear and presumption. There is not a profundity of either body or soul theoretically beyond its plumb-line. There is only one thing co-extensive with its claims: the imagination of an impaired intellect.

The priesthood is further distinctive in that it gives to women a place in the business equal to that of the men. Where a woman is clever enough she is eligible. There is no caprice, either social or religious, to keep her out of the highest profession in Congoland; rather a tasty morsel of heathendom for the palate of Christendom. Providing a woman has the disposition, presumption, and qualifications to discharge the functions and to maintain the reputation of the vocation, no man or body of men will say her nay. The result is that native women are seen emerging from the seclusion which normally encompasses the ordinary women, and conducting public functions of priestcraft and its

alliances. Why not? They can perform its fantasies, drone its twaddle, keep up its deceptions, perpetuate its mysteries as well as any male colleague in the office. That is the standard key to open the door leading into it. Moreover, there are departments peculiarly her own from which all negroes are excluded. The *nkamba*, for instance, can never be a man. The rites are patent to womenkind, and no one but a woman can officiate in them, which appears to us to be an excellent division of the labour and an admirable concession of the craft. It is a noteworthy provision in African fetishism that a priestess is placed exactly where a priest would be out of place. Things sacred to women are attended to by women. That is why the functionary of *mbola*—a fetish which treats diseases of the nose, throat, neck, and glands—is always a priestess. A priest is not even allowed to officiate at a funeral of *mbola*. It is where the priestess is most interesting. She herself descends into the grave facing a swamp. She arranges the bed of leaves on the bottom for the body to rest on with her own hands. She is the first to return some of the soil, doing it with her elbows, then with her head alternately, nine times nine. As she does this she touches the corpse on the head, the joints of the hands and legs, the buttocks, and the soles of the feet. Her last mysterious but remarkable act is to plant two shrubs on the grave. They are *lemba-lemba*, i.e. the tree of submission, and *ntontozi*, i.e. the tree of *life*. As a priestess she is both feared and revered, and, as far as we have observed, she delves even further into the occult and demoniacal than most priests. Outside her office she is only a "mere woman," and lives in the same storey with the commonalty of her sisters.

Whilst it would not be wise or fair to condemn all the work of the African priesthood, there is truly surprisingly little or nothing to commend it. We have elsewhere given due acknowledgment to certain worthy elements of fetish-

ism, but the professionalism of that dogma is teeming with trickery and deceit, in which the experience of upwards of five hundred years of a European brand has ably assisted them. It is probable that the priests are more deceived than deceiving, for evil spirits are more expert in that sort of thing than human mortals are, black or white. As it appears to an outsider, fetishism has created a formidable body of the smartest set of jugglers and impostors of the race. It embraces an intelligence department, a sort of secret service system, which keeps the profession well informed of all the sins, ills, weaknesses, fears, hopes, and needs of the community to which it ministers. Whatever is essential for it to know concerning its clientele, it gets to know, either by fair means or foul. The outcome is that the laity is nearly always in the power of the priest. The agency investigates the history, social standing, and all such matters as would be likely to bring an individual within its control. When a witch priest, for example, is engaged to discover a witch, he is bound to condemn something or someone. In the meantime he has come to know the most unpopular person among those who employ him. He then makes that man his victim, and when he condemns him to death everybody is satisfied except the doomed. Trick number one.

At Kingulu lived a woman who had the misfortune to lose several of her babies by death in a very short time. It meant, according to native mentality, that somebody in the family had bewitched them. To put a stop to it they called in the witch priest. He put the blame on a male relative who strongly protested his innocence. He was condemned to death. The priest then reverted to a favourite trick. He told the accused that if he would confess, and give his *mbangala*—that is a club given with a promise not to bewitch any more people—he would not allow the men to kill him. The man was in a fix. He knew he was

innocent, but to insist upon it meant that they would kill him. To say he was guilty would be to lie, but it would save his life to do so. The man chose to save his life. In doing it he paid the priest the compliment he wanted. For henceforth no one could doubt the priest's ability to detect witches. The club was a token of the accused man's promise. It was placed in the woman's house over the doorway, to be kept for the purpose of clubbing him should he again be caught " eating " other people's babies.

The famous *Kavwalandanda* fetish thrived solely on imposture. It was taken from town to town to " cure " the sick. If the person ill was not a witch it professed to cure that person. If he were a witch it would kill him. Whatever turn the sick man took, therefore, the fetish claimed the credit. The first thing the owner did when he set his fetish to work, was to ask everybody to leave him alone with the patient. He then invited the man to confess whom and how many he had bewitched. The sick man of course stoutly denied having bewitched anyone. The priest agreed, but said that in the interests of his fetish, as well as for the sake of himself, the man must mention a name, otherwise the fetish could not cure him. Anxious to get better, the poor dupe names a person, believing that if he refuses to do so the fetish will kill him. The traitor, having thus befooled his victim, goes out and tells the people that the man is a witch, mentioning the name of the deceased person confided to him by the sick man as having been killed by him. After the confession the priest commences treatment. He first sets the fetish in the room with the patient, then he gives him " medicine." The priest then occupies the next room or the next house. After a while, when all is quiet, and when the " medicine " begins to take effect, the man becomes worse. It is not long before he begins to groan. As he groans, the priest shouts so that all in the vicinity may hear, " Ah, there you are, *kavwal-*

andanda, do your work well." Addressing the people he says, "You see, the fetish knows he is a witch. It will not let him live." That night the man dies, poisoned by the fetish quack, but supposed by the people to have been killed by the fetish. It was a high system of murder, but it was also sincerely believed that the poisoned man was a "witch." This fetish went the round of Congo towns, subjugating every other fetish, killing right and left, until it met with a violent but deserving end in a determined moral revolt against it.

Now and again the priest comes under the suspicion of the populace. They seldom attack him openly because he is usually too cunning to betray himself. Dr. Bentley reports one case where the condemned shot the priest on the spot, and adds: "Where one is found cheating, where his accusations make life intolerable, he is occasionally set upon and killed. This is sometimes done by breaking his arms and legs with a club and then throwing him down into a chasm or pit where he starves to death." Sometimes the people will join together to oppose an impossible verdict he has imposed. A life may thus be saved, but a heavy fine takes its place. This happened to Nevilu's mother-in-law, who was condemned for having "eaten" (destroyed) one of Nevilu's children. Nevilu wanted the extreme penalty applied at once, but under pressure he consented, in the end, to a metaphorical death for her. She was fined sixty dollars and a pig to be divided between the father and the mother of the child. This was a clever dodge on the part of the elders, for it meant that the woman would only have to hand over half that amount, because Congo law provides that when part of the fine falls to the family of a defendant, it is not to be paid. So that in this case the part due to her own daughter could not be claimed. That is the way Talanga's grandmother outwitted Talanga's father, Nevilu.

We incline to the belief that the evil spirits deceive these professionals more radically than the professionals deceive the people. One is the sequence of the other. When the chief of Kisala was dying, a priestess of the dead (*ngang' a mvumbi*) held a séance for him. At the beginning of the "manifestations" she enquired the name of the spirit communicating. "Nsingi," came the answer. "Why are you angry with the chief?" pursued the medium. "Because," came the reply, "when he went to Lala's funeral he misbehaved himself at the graveside." "What must we do then to save his life?" continued the spiritualist. "Get such and such a fetish," replied Nsingi, "and he will get well again." They got the fetish at once, but it did not save the chief. When he died, the wits and wags of the town did not hesitate to impeach, not the genuineness of the priestess, or her craft, but the veracity of Nsingi. The probability is that they were near the root of the evil.

Native priestcraft is a ministry brimming over with fanciful things. At one time it tickles the humour, at another time it stirs the horror. Now it is grave, then it is gruesome. Sometimes it is ludicrous, sometimes it is loathsome. When it is not injurious it is often interesting.

The institution of *Nkind' evata*, the town policeman, gives one of the most interesting ceremonies performed by a priest. The fetish, which is supposed to kill epidemics, is obtained in the following way. The priest is sent for. The messenger lays the case before him in detail, emphasizing the reasons why the people have decided that the "policeman" is indispensable to them. When the priest has made himself master of the facts he settles his mode of procedure. He believes quite sincerely that evil spirits are at the bottom of the trouble which has led the people to seek the fetish, but he is not quite so sure that he can track them. He therefore provides himself with an

ingenious resource which will at least give his art the semblance of reality. He acquires the shell of a large snail, the biggest he can find. On his way to the disquieted town, and unknown to anybody, he hides the shell in the water nearest the scene of his intended performance. All the people of the neighbourhood assemble when the priest arrives. After he has completed the usual preliminary exercises, he declares that he has obtained a clue to the cause of the trouble. He has had a supernatural communication. It has been revealed to him that a colony of mischievous spirits are in the vicinity of the town. They are of the water nymph variety. They live in a shell. The shell is in the river where the women draw water. Their first business is to secure and destroy their habitation—the shell. If they do this it will render the noxious beings homeless. Under such circumstances they would not stay, for the last place in Africa these kind of spirits desire to be is in the district of the *Nkind' evata* priest. The congregation is then enthusiastic to go down to the water. Headed by the priest they form a procession. The drums boom. They dance and sing as they go: "The shell in the water, O priest, must be found." As soon as they arrive at the water the priest steps into it. He fumbles about for as long as he thinks fit, until his well-thought-out patter has sufficiently excited the crowd. When they are properly excited, he theatrically takes hold on an invisible something under the water. A trick struggle takes place. With a final jerk he brings the shell to the surface. There is high-class wizardry for you! Just as he said, so it is, shell and everything! The priest is acclaimed. He is a marvel, for they themselves saw the spirits trying their level best to hold on to their abode, and saw them beaten by their master. The shell is brought to the bank, to the pleasure and amazement of the people. The thing is smashed beyond all nymphean repair, and each person gets a bit to wear as

a bodyguard. They then stick up the " policeman " to prevent the spirits taking up their abode anywhere in the vicinity. Everybody then is very happy, though very deceived.

In the realm of religion there is, generally speaking, but little manifestation of mirth. It is considered by them too sacred to jest with. Here and there one may be found bold enough to make it the subject of a joke. Now and again one will even dare to make a fetish priest the butt of his humour. These priests themselves are among the most artful, but as artful as they are, it sometimes happens that someone not in the profession is even more cunning. Manuel Balu was a staunch defender of the priests. He was a great believer in them, and could extol their virtues as well as any man. He did not deny that some of them were rascals, but he reasoned that as it would be folly to condemn all white men as bad because a few of them were bad, so would it be folly to stigmatize all native priests as impostors on account of a few among them who were undoubtedly rogues. He used to tell how one of these charlatans was ingloriously trapped. There lived in a certain town a middle-aged man, abnormally sinewy and strong. He was exceptionally cunning, too. He had a heart " unbending as steel," as the natives put it. He knew no fear. This man one day decided to test the ability of a priest to find out the things he professed to know about those on whose behalf he exercised his sorcery. He confided his secret to his wives and friends. Then he sent for the priest. When he heard that he was coming he got two large fruit kernels, stuck one in each cheek to make a facial swelling, sat down on an old fire heap, literally in sackcloth and ashes, and looked his worst. His wives were gathered around him in an attitude of mystified sympathy, whilst his friends behaved in a manner of profound concern. The fine physique of the principal actor was effectively concealed

by a long, loose cloth and other disguises. The priest arrived. He at once saw what he took to be a sad case. The man, too, was evidently rich, judging from the number of relatives and friends assembled around him. That meant a worthy fee. It must be remembered that a priest is not allowed to approach his client, therefore no close examination is possible. His business is to find out for himself what or who is doing the mischief. He is supposed to be able to do this without any assistance such as an examination would afford. The priest soon got to work. He danced. He enchanted. He did all a priest generally does on such occasions to excite the crowd. Nor did the crowd in this instance fail him, although many of them were scarcely able to maintain their gravity. They yelled with him, sang with him, danced with him. When the priest came to that part of the programme where the witch is disclosed he made no hesitation. Now, what the priest knew well was that the " bewitched " man was a bully, and that he had recently ill-treated one of his sisters, for which, it was known, she entertained a spite against him. The priest took this as his cue. The sister was there ; so with dramatic effect the priest accused her. That was the time at which there should have been an orthodox hubbub, but there was an ominous silence, much to the chagrin of the professional. Then came the climax. Jumping to his feet, the man took the kernels from his mouth and threateningly made for the priest with, " You scoundrel. Out you go, or I'll . . . " but he had vanished.

A people with the humorous energy of the Ba-Congo are far from being dull, and still farther from being hopeless. As a loose straw will show which way the wind is blowing, so a national trait will show the bent of a national character. The doom of African priestcraft is sealed.

CHAPTER XVI

Witchcraft

OF all the diabolical institutions of Congoland, that of witchcraft is the most demoniacal. It stands for one thing: murder. Governments and Missions are a check upon it, but to what extent it is difficult to determine. There are many places where neither law nor love has penetrated ; centres far away from the eyes and arms of both where witchcraft still holds sway. It obtains even in the vicinity of European residences where no further knowledge of a grave crime may be known than the fact that since the last tax was levied So-and-so has mysteriously disappeared. There are many ways of executing the popular will against one accused of witchcraft, even under the nose of the authorities. Sometimes the authorities help the cause by passing sentence on one against whom a false charge has been invented by those who conceal their real motive in ridding themselves of a " witch." (*Ndoki* is both masculine and feminine.)

The last man accused of the black art in the Congo capital was condemned by King Alvaro Nsing' a Nkanga. The natives even used Snr. F., who was ignorant of the real movement against the victim. A native of E., a town now extinct, but then situated near San Salvador on what is now a flourishing farm, was accused of witchcraft. They dare not kill him outright because the Resident lived too near. So the town trumped up a charge against him in which they secured the complicity of the king. Snr. F. found the man guilty and put him in prison. At

night the man escaped. Unfortunately he returned to his town, his enemy's camp. His wives, glad to see him, at once made ready a feast. Then the end came tragically. The king, upon hearing of his escape, immediately sent his soldiers after him with orders to kill him at sight and to report him lost. Prior to entering the town, the soldiers agreed upon a ruse to scare off all the rest of the people whilst two or three of them pounced upon the escaped prisoner. To effect this they resorted to the strange but effective dodge of disguising themselves in various ways. Outside the town they stripped themselves in the darkness, and after they had painted themselves and otherwise made themselves hideous, they rushed stark naked in a body into the town yelling like fiends are believed to yell. The trick was successful. As the people fled helter-skelter the soldiers fell upon the convict, dragged him to the outskirts of the town and there ruthlessly murdered him in cold blood. The same night they reported to the king that they could not find him. The king passed the report on to the Resident just as he received it. It was accepted, and the matter gradually passed into oblivion. That is the way natives have used authorities to do the next best thing, as they supposed, when the administration of poison would have risked their liberty, if not their lives. Further in the bush, away from the track of trader and ruler, away from fort and soldier, the method of despatch is less formal. The Congolese are never at a loss as to what to do with a witch. Once a man or woman comes under the ban, an adequate way is soon found of meting out a penalty.

The natives do not, of course, accuse one of witchcraft before an official, but, as we have seen, they can generally bring one to book by the help of the law on some false charge. When the Government detects a trick, especially when it is a question of life and death, they expose it and punish it with a few stringent lessons to those respon-

sible for it. At the same time it is seldom the officials run the blockade of native conservatism. No one can be more secretive than Congo negroes when they have a mind for it. Still, the law is sound on the matter, making direct for its extirpation from native institutions whenever the opportunity presents itself.

King Dom Alvaro, son of the renowned Dom Peter V, was specially known for his cruelty. Alvaro Malanza, a particularly bad man, was accused, perhaps justly, perhaps because he was a rascal, of paying too much attention to one of Alvaro's wives. Malanza was arrested. His majesty specially prepared himself to meet him. He girded on his sword and appeared in full regalia. In the court he made the man and woman join hands, drew his sword and approached them with an oath that in that attitude he would kill them both. Doubtless he would have done so, too, but for his son who restrained him for fear of consequences at the hands of the foreigner. The Dom sent Malanza into banishment, diplomatically adding that he was to be kept in no town, the royal way of ordering the man's execution whilst hoodwinking the Resident that he had only sent him into exile. Malanza was led away to death. The king's son, fearing that the secret order would come out, ran and told the priest, who communicated the news to the Governor. Soldiers were at once sent to the " palace " to release the condemned ; failing that, they were to arrest his majesty. The king at first denied that Malanza had been to his house. It was only when he understood that he would be apprehended that he became amenable. He was then very much afraid lest his men should have already done the bloody deed. Messengers were despatched post-haste to shout as they went along, " Don't spill the wine ; don't spill the wine " (*o malavu ke nubukudi ko*), the Congo way of saying " Don't shed his blood." Malanza was brought back and set free by

the Resident. That is the official attitude towards native excesses. The king was foiled, but Malanza became a marked man. The king's family never ceased their machinations against him until the legal arm which rescued him had sent him into exile. That was since the revolt of Buta. Malanza has not been heard of since. He was a "witch," which explains the whole tragedy.

Witchcraft is the greatest curse of the country. Mothers will forsake their children on account of it. Dearest friends become bitterest foes through it. No Congo negro has any use for a witch, be it son, daughter, neighbour, or stranger. They are either exiled, ostracised, or killed. Proofs of confederacy with it or guilt of it may be anything, which others lack and covet, or which may markedly differentiate one person from another. A peculiarity, an extraordinary phenomenon, an unusual trait, an omen, a dream, a good harvest, an accident, wealth, wisdom, skill, prosperity, and so forth, are among the "proofs" that one is a *ndoki* (witch). A child quick in learning, quaint in its ways, odd in its appearance, uncanny in its development, any one of these features or any like feature may be sufficient to curse it.

As a rule, an adult witch will fearlessly take the ordeal of poison. We have met them running away, fleeing for their life, but for the most part they are brave to the last. All the accused believe they are innocent, even when those who accuse them have made up their minds to kill them. They drink poison of a strength to kill an ox hoping against hope.

The "witch" is the most terrible anthropo-demon the Congo mind has created. He is a demon with a human personification quite distinct from the devil. He is worse than the devil. The Congo devil only perverts the souls of negroes, but the witch "eats and digests" them. Not only so, the witch is one of themselves, flesh of their

flesh, bone of their bone, one of their own number who has sold himself to the underworld for occult purposes. Whatever the native devil may be, he is certainly not regarded as a relative of black men. In his alliance with the society of demons the witch procures for himself not only the licence but the means of doing anything he likes, assuming any form he chooses, going anywhere he pleases, in a word, he owns the warrant for turning the world about him into a pandemonium of similar beings who feast upon the other part of humanity. He can disguise himself as an animal, a bird, a fish, a reptile, or remain as he is in loin-cloth with " chop " bag and gun, spear or tomahawk, like an ordinary mortal. He can carry off his victim on the wind, or fasten on to him like a vampire, or follow him about as a goblin, or draw off his vitality until he sickens and dies. It is believed that he has an organ of scent such as exists among the civet order. For this reason the witch priest has invented a special fetish by means of which he is able to smell the effluvia of the scamp through the head of the image. In this way the professional tracks the rogue down with the certainty of a hound on the trail of a fox. Like a foxhound, the priest may not always get his quarry, but he invariably runs him to earth and so knows where he is.

A witch can adapt himself to every kind of circumstance, even the most straitened. He can accommodate himself in anything from the limits of a gun-barrel or a cowrie shell, to the spacious veldt or prairie. Ground nuts (" monkey ") abound in Congoland. It is because one nut cannot easily be distinguished from another that the all-sagacious witch makes a pea-nut pod his favourite hiding-place. When he does this he creates a problem for the witch priest like the needle in a haystack, or a golf ball lost on a pebble beach. The witch prefers the graveyard and the night. The only things he cannot face are chalk

and *nkasa* poison. They are, to him, fetish antidotes. He has a cultivated taste for babies. He can attach himself to babies born or unborn. He can at times trick every fetish if the witch priest is not behind it. He can even corrupt the priest if he gets half a chance. The witch is far more elusive than the "Scarlet Pimpernel." It requires a tremendous power of charms, wine, and chalk to trap him. It is extremely difficult to know what is witch and what is not witch in a country where a witch may be anything from a cockroach to a leopard, or from a blow-fly to a crocodile. Unless he put his foot on every beetle a native cannot tell whether he has squashed a genuine insect or one of his own relatives. Relatives, however, have to run that risk if they give themselves over to the devil, and masquerade as witches in the form of beasts, birds, or creeping things.

What terrors, real terrors, the natives suffer from this imaginary evil no pen can describe. It is believed that no trick is unknown to the witch, no chink through which he cannot squeeze himself, no object he cannot bewitch, no extreme to which he dare not go. It is supposed that witches "feed" on human souls. They have a proverb which says that the witch is so utterly base that he will first "eat" your child, then come to comfort you. Another proverb which states that he will perch himself in invisible form under the eaves of your house to gloat over his unconscious victim through the wall, from which position he will not move until he hears the death-cry of his prey. Still another proverb which affirms that he is so insolent that even when the parents sleep with their child in the middle of the bed between them for protection, the arch-fiend will somehow find his way in and fasten himself on to the little one. That is black thought on a black theme.

There is believed to be a society of witches which anyone bad enough may join, providing one can happen on the

secrets which control admission. Failure here is a grave error which may mean death to the aspirant or, as we have noticed elsewhere in the case of one who forfeited over £40 and a boar, the payment of a heavy penalty. Some men are "known" to be witches. Nor do strong, daring, callous men deny it, notwithstanding the grave risk they run. For the sake of the gross authority it gives over the credulous a few fearless rascals really seek to be regarded as embodiments of these malignant goblins. Nekaka's father was a well-known witch whom no one dare touch. He was able to keep the people in great fear of him. Being a great chief no priest dared accuse him. Priests, too, are susceptible to bribes. Rich men can be *ndoki* if they are cunning enough. It is an advantage to them also because the credulity of the people is so profound that any scamp may easily obtain almost boundless influence over them. Once it is known that one is a member of the spectral band, one with the necessary daring can practise any deception he likes. A man who becomes a witch by his own choice is usually sufficiently powerful and brutal to hold the people in such terror as to guarantee his own immunity from danger. Money, coupled with brute force, is a most potent weapon in the possession of a "witch." It is at least enough to secure him against invective and aggression. Such a franchise is always accompanied by unlawful, awe-inspiring conduct on the part of the scoundrel able to maintain it. So thrives his reputation as a wizard and incidentally the usefulness and necessity of the witch priest.

King Peter V himself once said to a native friend of ours that he would like to be a "witch." "But," said our friend, "you are a great king, more powerful than any witch." "That is true," replied His Majesty, "but I am only a day king. If I were a 'witch' I should also be king of the night." That is exactly what Congo witchcraft is, a cult

THE TOWN POLICEMAN.

The pot is filled with a choice assortment of odds and ends and supported in the fork of a split stake. It is placed in the main entrance to the village to hold up evil spirits,

A WITCH PRIEST ON HIS ROUNDS.

He is the same weird and feared being from west to east,

of the night, a craft of the darkness. When the king died he said that witches were killing him, but that in the presence of white men he was unable to defend himself. He died believing himself to be the victim of the black art.

An old blind man of Vindu applied to a reputed witch for admission into the community for which he was prepared to pay the maximum fee : a human sacrifice. He promised to offer his only nephew, Belumbi by name, if the professional would initiate the applicant into it. He was no harum-scarum who did not know his own mind. He was a staid old man who knew too much of the world to stake his life on it. He sincerely sought to become identified with the powers of darkness, and when he found that the man to whom he applied could not satisfy him he publicly denounced him. The quack had to flee for his life across the border. The Congo native believes in witchcraft as sincerely as a Protestant believes in the conscience, a Catholic in the Vatican, or a Jew in the Mosaic law.

The people know no mercy where the witch is concerned, though all are not killed at the time of being accused. Sometimes the victim, who always pleads for his life, is given a chance on condition that he gives his *mbangala*, which is a club given with a promise not to bewitch any more. The club always hangs over his head, so to speak, and unless some alien power in the shape of law or gospel intervene his fate is sealed, for in giving the club he has acknowledged his wizardry, though he had no option, at the cost of his life, but to give the club. Should the promise be broken, an eventuality resting entirely upon the whim of the priest, the man's own club would be the weapon with which they would kill him.

To commute a capital sentence is extremely rare. More often the doomed person is executed even when he has demonstrated his innocence according to the approved Congo method, namely, the vomiting of the ordeal poison.

One man, a relative of Kitomene, took the poison seven times on one charge. Each time he vomited it. By law established he should have been released after the first evidence of his innocence. He should have taken the poison but once. Notwithstanding, he was killed. The murdered man happened to be the only male member of the family. His sister, in the face of this injustice, turned to her two daughters who were standing by, and took an oath: "*Nanga ke mono ko i ngw' eno yavilukil' e nim' a mpuluku ko*," which was a curse upon herself because she had no son to defend her brother. To her daughters she then said: "If you were men your uncle could not be killed like this. They take advantage of our lack of men." She then put her hands upon her knees, turned a somersault, putting, as she did so, her two daughters under a curse not to bear children at all unless they were sons, who, in time of danger, could defend them and theirs. Strange to say of those two women, each had a family of five, not one girl among them, but ten of the sturdiest most powerfully built men in the district.

Matters concerning witchcraft are of such elasticity that there is no limit to which they may not be strained. These excesses are only typical of a multiform variety of abuses perpetrated in its name.

A short time ago we visited the town of P. Everything appeared to be normal. Everybody seemed to be happy and contented. Little did we know at the time that but a few months before it had been the scene of an awful witch tragedy. A woman had gone out to her farm as usual in the morning, taking her child with her. The little one, playing near the water, was carried off by a crocodile. The popular notion was, that some evil person had turned himself into a crocodile for the specific purpose of getting this woman's child. The witch priest was sent for. He is a native of Londe on the Nkusu hills. After the usual

ceremony he accused five people, four men and one woman ; a most extraordinary thing in Congo witchcraft. Seldom does the priest condemn more than one at a time. But the people of this district are extraordinary people. Of the five indicted three escaped that night. Two, a man and his wife, were killed on the spot without *nkasa* poison. They were despatched with knives, and their bodies were burnt. These people never allow the poison to be taken whenever it is a case in which a crocodile is the chief factor. The chief who sent the executioners to P. had, shortly before, admitted us to his town and confidence. His own son who lived with us related the case to us. The only thing we have found to quell this sort of thing is truth, and the only sphere in which it completely disappears is that of the people who preach and teach it.

Perhaps the most revolting practice in connection with the administration of the poison, is that which provides the priest (*ngol' a nkasa*) with part of the virus of which it is composed. All the fluid from the corpse imagined to have been killed by the witch, is collected during the process of its decomposition and sent to the priest, who mixes it with the *nkasa* bark powder. This is administered by the mouth to the accused as part of the ordeal draught.

The witch demon, it is believed, can remain in the corpse of the man killed for witchcraft, after its interment, from which it sallies forth at night in any form it chooses to continue the evil work to which it was devoted when in the living flesh. They will then exhume the body and burn it in the hope of destroying the fiend residing in it.

The first known case of smallpox in the capital gave rise to a weird scene of witchcraft. The people were not aware of the danger from the disease. Maybe at that time they would have done what they did even had they

known the risk. When the priest had declared the corpse to be that of a witch they exhumed it and carried it to the outside of the town to burn it. As they were carrying the body through the market square of the town, the neck, being without support, broke. That was taken as a clear proof of the man's guilt. His guilt had caused him to bow his head with shame, was the explanation the rabble gave of the episode.

The administration of poison is not the only way the Congo people have of inflicting death for witchcraft. Indeed, it is a moot point whether the poison is ever allowed to complete its work, for as soon as the man becomes unconscious, and often before he is unconscious, he is clubbed to death.

As we have already seen in the case of the P. victims, knives are sometimes used to despatch the witch. Some two years ago our head man passed through a town on the Zombo road in which resided a personal friend of his. He went to pay him a visit but failed to find him. When he made enquiries he was told a gruesome story. The man had been condemned and slain as a witch. But the manner of his death was not by poisoning. He was reckoned the most powerful man physically in the neighbourhood. At the time he was accused he jumped to his feet, made off for his house, took his gun from the corner, turned on his pursuers, and dared them to touch him. They wisely stood off, knowing that he could and would shoot any of them who tried to lay hands on him. There is a proverb which says : " An angry man never catches a witch." They waited. They went about their business, letting the man alone. He, on his part, never let his gun out of his reach day or night. The people developed an apparent indifference towards the affair so that it bid fair to pass over. Meanwhile, unknown to the accused, their plans were maturing. The time came when they arranged to dig

new pig traps round the town. These traps are about five to nine or ten feet deep and from three to five feet across. The work was done by gangs working in short shifts. The condemned man was there with his gun. Soon it came to his turn to dig. Those in the hole jumped out, and good-naturedly handed the hoe to him as next on duty. Setting down his gun he got into the hole. As he bent his back to his work his end came. At that moment a blade smote him across the back of the neck. He fell. Another " witch " had paid the penalty.

It must not be imagined that they sacrifice for the sake of sacrificing. Congolese do not kill for the sake of killing. They kill because they sincerely believe that by killing and by killing alone, they can rid themselves of a mighty evil in the form of demons incarnate.

Burning is another form of execution. It was formerly the penalty for murder, adultery with a chief's wife, theft. It always has been the extreme for witchcraft. Could we but penetrate into the farthermost recesses of heathen life we should find all these methods in vogue. To what degree it is impossible to say. It is certain that the Government system of dotting the country with forts, garrisoned with foreigners, native and European, considerably lessens the opportunities for such crimes. Equally certain it is that when the deed is done those who do it ensure that the people they do not want to know, never get to know. They keep no register of deaths. No medical certificate is required by these heathens as to the why, when, and the wherefore of a demise. When the time comes round for paying the tax, So-and-so is reported dead and that is the end of it. If they want to rid themselves of a person they have the ways and means of doing it without letting the world know anything about it.

Dr. Bentley mentions two cases of burning. In each case we are left to infer that life was not extinct, although

the men were doubtlessly unconscious. After all murder is murder whether done with a knife, a club, or a pile of faggots. The heathen law, "a head for a head," is still applied to the assassin and the witch when far enough in the depths of the forest or the jungle. The same opportunity which enables them to put it into execution by poison or steel, allows them the chance of administering it by burning also. We believe the uncivilized beings apply whatever mode they deem appropriate and effective. They are as likely to use one mode of despatch as another where life is not held sacred. It is a condition of mind which can only be changed by the dawning of a great and good light. So far, where it has dawned it has done its gracious work.

Burning, for the most part, takes place after death. The main object is to destroy utterly the evil spirit, to render a body incapable of harbouring a vampire, a phantom, a sprite, or a goblin. Burning alive is certainly a hard fact of history. In 1892 a murderer—hence a "witch"—was burnt on the public market-place of Nkandu a Makela, near Mbwela, and was witnessed by Nefwani, Walekuka, and Kivitidi. The victim was besmeared with palm oil, dressed in a long coat made of dried palm leaves, and set on fire. He ran about the market ablaze until he fell. They then decapitated him and set his head on the skull pile in the square, to act as a warning to others. The relatives took the charred body, put it on a wood pile, and so reduced it to ashes. In addition, the family had to pay a pig and an amount of cash.

Masaki of Tundu, a town about fifteen miles from our door, was sentenced to be burnt alive by King Peter V of revered memory. Masaki shot his little girl in the farm, where she had gone to pluck pepper. There was a big doubt as to whether he did it intentionally or not. When she cried, "Father, you have shot me," he tried to run for

help or to run away, but fell in a swoon. He was put in stocks forthwith. He, too, was dressed in fine leaves (*vidi*, *mampokovoko*, *mansiensie*, etc.) on the day of his execution. K., one of the best educated men among the Ba-Congo and a friend of ours, then a boy helped to dress him. They took him outside the city, cut the *tendo achillis*, set him in a pile of wood, and then fired it.

The last witch killed in the famous old capital took place in 1877, a significant date from every point of view. A quarrel arose between King Peter V and Noso, the prince and heir. The house in which we lived for some years stands on the site of Noso's "palace." At the side still stands the old baobao tree, a relic of the royal seat. He wished to marry the king's daughter, Miss Malekofuku, still alive. Bianu had a profound hatred for him, and ran away as soon as they placed her in the prince's house. When the king found out that she did not want Noso he freed his daughter from the engagement, and told her to remain with him. At this the prince was furious. To spite the king he imprisoned some traders declaring that he would not release them until the king sent Bianu back to him. Pedro V called his councillors together and compelled the prince to let the men go. The next thing Noso did was to insult the king publicly. That filled his majesty's cup and caused him to call his warriors together to teach the prince a lesson. The soldiers camped near Nekaka's farm and in the Vemadia valley just outside the city walls. In the fight which followed the king's favourite son Netala fell mortally wounded. The king at once assumed that the witches were at work against him. When Mantengo, his second son, was wounded he took action against the witches. Etambi was the witch priest. He accused two, Masapai, the king's other son, and Tandisa, father of Lombo Nkongolo, who was one of Noso's wives. The two were said to be confederates in causing the death of Netala and attempting

the life of Mantengo. Being a royal prince they could not kill Masapai. In lieu of death he was fined thirty slaves, which he paid to his own father. Tandisa was not so fortunate. He was a handsome man and had a beautiful wife; two excellent qualifications for sending a Congolese to his death. They deliberately gave him false *nkasa* poison, which he would be less likely to vomit than the real thing. A palm fibre was then put round his neck and he was led away to Madungu valley. The king's aide-de-camp arrived with the royal sword with which he slit the forehead of Tandisa, thus giving the royal sanction to the deed of slaying the father-in-law of the rebel prince for wizardry against the king's family.

There is only one authority that has effectively driven witchcraft out of the old Congo capital, and only one that can effectively drive it out of the country. It is that which has driven it out of other countries—the power of a new revelation which creates a new conscience, a new principle, and a new soul. This new conscience was seen in operation twelve years after the execution of Tandisa, when a large body of men, led by Peter Mazitu, publicly rushed the *kavwalandanda* image at Kimwanda, overturned it, stripped it of its trappings, dragged it into the city, and broke it in pieces. It was a fetish as tall as an average man worked by a native priest from Vivi, who killed right and left for high fees and popularity.

In the Mavuma district a Protestant funeral was in progress. Suddenly a quarrel started and weapons were out in a moment. A native Christian teacher present, realizing the grave danger, appealed to the party to cease squabbling. It stopped as if by magic. A Roman Catholic chief standing by marvelled at this, and asked his own teacher, who was with him, how he accounted for it, when, as he said, "our people would have been at the throat of

the teacher as well." "You see, sir," replied the R. C. teacher, "they have a *wonderful book*. They do these things by the power of *the wonderful book*."

Heathenism dies a hard death, but in its death-throes it bears witness to its conqueror—*the wonderful book*.

CHAPTER XVII

A Death & Resurrection Society

AFRICA has always been prolific in secret societies. Nearly every tribe has some sort of fraternity from which the commonalty are excluded. Whether their source be Palestine, Rome, or Egypt there are, so far, no means of deciding. This aspect of African life is but the natural outgrowth of an instinct for the occult and mysterious. It is a fitting corollary of mysticism and necromancy probably dating back to the Pharaohs if not beyond. Maybe they are the corruptions of a cult which had an honourable origin and which in other lands and under better culture has been productive of some of the most noble orders of society. That is only conjecture, but it is at least worthy of a place among those opinions which can see an ancient civilization in their ethics of the present, or a theology in the perverted rites of their religion of to-day. If their religion used to be nearer God and their economics neared those of the Jews even their defiled, curious, secret communities may have seen better days. As met with to-day they are institutions of uncleanness. Rude shacks with a maze of straw fences to keep off all intruders, are set up, perhaps in a valley which is more in the track of beasts than of men, or in parts of the forest which are the haunts of neither beasts nor men. Should any unauthorized person come within the forbidden precincts they are forcibly sworn to the cult like the proverbial lady who hid in the clock. There is an alternative infinitely worse but infinitely effective—death. Mem-

bers enjoy the licence to raid society at will, carry off what they will, assault whomsoever they will, and generally to act the part of veritable maniacs on the spree.

The most famous brotherhood we know is the Death and Resurrection Society which we happen to know from the inside and not merely from observation. It affords us the one and only clue of any idea of the resurrection of the body among the Ba-Congo. Both the "death" and the "resurrection," however, are fantastic. The whole thing gathers round some fetishes known as *nkita* (*nkita* is plural). These fetishes are believed to be the authors of all deformities in man, animal, or article. The crook in a stick is the work of *nkita*. So also is the deformity in an infant. A disfigurement in bird, beast, or creeping thing is the curse of *nkita*, so also is a disfigurement in man, woman, or child.

Their function is threefold: to deform a being in the making, to cripple a being in accident, and thirdly, to refrain from inflicting either, as a favour to all faithful devotees. The first is a penalty to posterity, the second a penalty to a culprit, the third is a concession to all who glorify them.

Nkita cannot repair a damage when once they have inflicted it. Once they have crippled a person they cannot rectify the fault. It is another of those subtle pretensions so common to organizations which are under the necessity of providing loopholes for their failures. Visible malformations, such as stiff neck, lateral curvature of the spine, bow legs, flat foot, hammer toe, or any of the species of club foot, *nkita* are not fool enough to pretend to cure. Even an African fetish will not stake its reputation on something that will kill it. A hunchback cannot get rid of his hump by *nkita*. A stammerer will continue to stutter even after he has joined the society. A club foot is always a club foot. A cross-eye is never anything else

but a cross-eye. *Nkita* make splay feet, knock knees, stiff joints, but they make no pretence to put them right. To profess the ability to do so would at once put the outside world in a position to judge for itself, and the first cripple to come forth out of a lodge would be the death of the craft. What they can do, what they are asked to do, and what they are expected to do is to refrain from repeating such deformities in a member of the craft or his family. Physical deficiencies which are not so conspicuous as anatomical irregularities, and which consequently are not open to the observation and judgment of the people are professedly cured by *nkita*—another subtlety quite worthy of the diplomacy of spiritualists the world over. An invisible malformation which nobody can see or know except those concerned, *nkita* cure, because that is a province in which nobody can criticize or contradict. A pretence to rectify a deformed limb which everybody can see and know is too bold a venture even for African mysticism, but invisible distortions which no one can perceive or understand is a fairly safe sphere of operation for trickery and deceit. *Nkita* "cure" irregularities which no one can judge cured or non-cured.

These magical "cures" are brought about by a very clever scheme of re-creation. The clients die metaphorically, are cut to pieces phraseologically, to ensure "death," and in due time are pieced together again in a new form, minus the ailment. It is done in a lodge called *ndembo*, situated in some ghostly place chosen with a view to striking dread into the heart; a spot which invariably makes a negro's hair bristle on end at the mere mention of its name. The lodge is strongly fenced round to obtain complete seclusion. No one except sly old members are allowed near the compound on pain of death. The road is blocked by a twisted creeper guaranteed to twist the body, if not the neck, of any trespasser. A pole on either side of the path driven

into the ground, is a true sign of danger, beyond which, just three paces, is the place of execution of any intruder. The proverb " Keep your foot off the *ndembo* road " is in everybody's mouth. It points a fear which effectively secures for the treachery of the fraternity a complete immunity.

There are five degrees in the lodge of assembled heathens. The grand master is responsible for the whole concern, from the " death " to the " resurrection." He controls the lodge and gets the money. Next are the officers of the lodge, chosen for their strength of muscle and pugnacity for the purpose of dealing with obstreperous characters, both inside and outside the lodge. An objector is knocked down as with a mallet and kept down until he harmonizes with the rest. These officers are the cardinals of the court, the future masters, deputy chairmen and vice-presidents, so to speak, who by virtue of their brawn instead of brain do all the odd jobs outside the lodge, such as plundering other people's farms for food, or raiding a village for conscripts, or augmenting the superstitions by any additional nonsense they can think of. Inside the lodge they " turn the ' dead ' over at least once a day." The next grade is the ordinary members who have " died " in a previous lodge. They give general assistance in a raid, a murder, or anything demanded of them by the necessity of the moment, the exigencies of the craft, or by command of a superior confederate. The next rank is those who seek legitimate initiation. Those who want to get rid of a malady or a calamity. Perhaps a mother has given birth to a cripple. She seeks the society to prevent the risk of having another. Maybe an epidemic sweeps a district. They go to *ndembo* not only to get rid of it, but to stave off another. Probably a wife has been unable to present her husband with normal offspring or with any offspring at all. She goes to *nkita* to throw off her shame. They die the death of the cult in

order to be remade. It is in the remake that the disabilities are removed by the gods. In some mysterious way they get rid of the old body with its old ailments which is "raised from the dead" with capacities new and potent. To make an offering to a capricious deity, or to propitiate it, to ordain a new priest of the order, to insure a strong, healthy, regular birth-rate, and such like things, the lodge of the death and resurrection society is opened. The fifth class in a lodge of assembled heathens is the conscripts: people who do not want to "die," but who are "killed" whether they want to be or not. This is the department in which the more sportive elements of the craft let off their vivacity commonly called steam. To them it is rare fun to catch others, carry them off to *ndembo*, then sponge on their relatives for food and luxuries until the "resurrection" of the neophytes. All who enter the lodge for the first time must be carried as if dead. Volunteers are expected to fall down "dead" whenever the craftsmen approach them. Conscripts are knocked down "dead" and carried off *bon gré mal gré*. When the press-gang has once got hold on a man he may rave as he likes, but he has to go. They shout, beat the ground with sticks, make imitation thuds, to impress anyone within earshot that a genuine death of violence is taking place. It is wise to feign death, otherwise one gets the frog-march to the lodge and not a few palpable reminders of the firm intentions of one's "pall bearers," which very speedily bring him to a tractable frame of mind.

Behind the stockade some of the most grotesque, cruel, and revolting scenes known to Congo life are perpetrated. The first to enter the lodge is the first to "die" and the first to "rise" again. By virtue of his seniority he is regarded as a superior kind of "corpse." He becomes host to the remainder of the "dead." He is named *Kabela*. Disguised beyond all recognition he welcomes

every " corpse " as it is brought in. He leads the attack upon any new party forced into the fraternity, and once he has " tasted blood " there is no escape from him.

Obedience is the primary duty of every candidate. To enforce it, extreme discipline is exercised. The first lesson is made as nauseating as possible. The oldest men in the lodge, with the worst decayed teeth, are chosen to masticate some food. When they have chewed it well it is put out of the mouth on to the head of a drum with a liberal quantity of salivary dressing. Every novitiate must then kneel with hands behind, eat it all up without scruple and without diffidence. The oath of allegiance is then taken.

The penalty of unlawfully divulging the secrets is perpetual slavery of the traitor and his family. In their slavedom the awful fear that something dreadful will be visited upon them by the *nkita* demons generally keeps them silent on matters of the craft. A twisted neck, a stiff leg, or a spinal crook, is a penalty no man cares to risk. The extreme penalty is death, which is most secure, for " dead men tell no tales." If a man runs away after once being within the walls of the lodge he is hunted and destroyed. His crime gives away the secret because he is thought to be dead. A " corpse " is not supposed to run away. He is made a corpse in reality for his betrayal. For these reasons nothing will induce a heathen to impart the secrets. Only where Christianity exposes the uselessness and absurdity of the custom is it possible to obtain information.

Chastity is enjoined upon all the members, but it is safe to say that it is scarcely ever observed. They sin and sin horribly. Children are born and murdered. There is a hole dug in the centre of every lodge where the hair of a dwarf or an albino is put. The hole is the grave of all the illegitimate children born there. It is necessary to destroy these little ones as the " dead " are not supposed to have

babies. To carry out any children they did not carry in would be to expose the imposture. In anticipation of such an eventuality instruments are forged called *mingenge*. It is not only an instrument of music, but also an instrument of slaughter; the slaughter of the innocents. A prong is passed up each nostril right into the brain of the infant. No child improperly born in *ndembo* escapes this horror.

In the case of a woman enciente when she enters the lodge, the child when born is not put to death. A very capricious answer is given to anyone smart enough to make enquiries as to the nativity of the child. When the members of *ndembo* " die " they befool the friends into a belief that it is death in reality. An animal is killed and cut into pieces which are carried about the town dripping blood, as the actual flesh of the " dead " ones in the lodge. A true born child is represented as having been extracted with the knife from the side of a mother when she was " cut in pieces."

Just inside the lodge entrance there is a raised platform on which all the members lie as dead, where, in a complete state of nudity, they dry " in the sun " every day from 9 a.m. until 4 p.m. They lie on their backs with a palm kernel set on the stomach to keep them from moving. Should the nut be displaced the culprit is beaten. They are turned over once a day. When they lie face downwards the kernel is set in the nape of the neck. This may go on for any length of time. The lodge is never closed so long as births take place, or are promised.

The first duty in closing a lodge of *ndembo* ritual is to appoint the " resurrection " day. Should any unforeseen circumstances prevent the closing on the day stipulated, such as a real death, or a birth, it is publicly attributed to the fact that in the reassembling of the divided portions of the " dead " the limbs became mixed, consequently a reassortment is necessary, which takes more time. It would never do for Alfred to have John's feet, or for a head with

a beard to appear on the body of a damsel. The closing is then postponed to allow each member to have the limbs and flesh originally given to them.

There is an alternate method of closing the lodge. A party is sent fishing. They bring the fish alive and place them in an artificial lake dug in the middle of the court-yard. If the fish die before the day appointed for the closure it is postponed. When the fish outlive the day agreed upon the closure is performed. The members plaster themselves all over with mud and other stuff. They cut off beards and hair for the first time since entering the lodge. These are buried in the fish lake. A tonsure is cut on the head to represent this lake. As the public believe them to have actually died and risen again the members are taught that their conduct must be consistent with that theory. They must act like newborn babies. The result is, they appear with adult frames dominated by infantile minds.

On the day of their return to society they are carried to the centre of the nearest town by the old members of the cult, where, after a sprinkling by a native priest they are claimed by their relatives who carry them home as nearly like babies in arms as they can. For five or six days or more this condition of infancy continues, during which time they play the fool generally. They do all sorts of idiotic things which they imagine to be consistent with babyhood. When they eat they stuff the food into the ears or up the nostrils instead of the mouth, until others correct them. Old folks chew the food for them to make it more digestible for their baby organs. They suck their thumbs, play with rattles, tilt over childlike on the slightest provocation, cry for the moon or some other impossible thing. They know no language but an equivalent to "Ride a cock-horse to Banbury Cross." When they move they creep. In fact, just those things which are common to imbecility are for a

time common to the behaviour of these secretive devotees. As they metaphorically grow up they metaphorically return to normal sanity.

It is the cult of a lost race, the ritual not only of a perverted intellect, but of a perverted soul. Education alone cannot solve this problem. We have seen them come out of a prolonged course of it and return to their savagery as a swine returns to wallow in his beloved mire. After years of restraint and good behaviour we have known them return to polygamy and general heathenism as naturally as a duck takes to water. The solution is solely by implanting within the heart the life-giving principle of a heaven-born faith which brings conscience, conduct, and character into harmony with the Being whom that faith enshrines in the soul. This is the power which has driven African secret societies beyond the precincts of Christian enterprise so that to-day the vile thing we have described ekes out its life in the unplumbed depths of paganism.

CHAPTER XVIII

Laws, Customs & Ethics

SAVAGEDOM is neither bedlam nor pandemonium. There are numerous elements of both, but a spice of good things saves it from either lunacy, on the one hand, or utter degeneracy on the other. Life is not all licence and lawlessness even among the lowest tribes. We have thought of heathendom as a place where law has gone mad, but, at worst, it is only like the steed to which Charles Dickens likened the law of another land—only more so. A lot depends upon view-point. The excesses and eccentricities of civilization tend to lose their abnormalities in familiarity with them, but they would take on a more dreadful aspect if we were introduced to them direct from a higher civilization. The romance of foreign life is in a sense of the difference between it and the one we are used to ; difference in locality as well as in the manner of doing things. The way a negro gets drunk is no doubt pitiably picturesque to the man who has always associated the condition with a drinking saloon. To club a man to death, to poison him, spear him, or burn him is horrifying to one whose sentiments on execution have been confined to a scaffold, an electric chair, a guillotine, or a firing squad, but where is the difference psychologically ? We know cannibals who open wide their eyes and blow blasts of hot air between their lips in horror when told that some white men electrocute criminals, whilst others pull their necks out. To the pagan it is the last thing in " law," but he cannot understand why it is law. The stain on another's

garment is usually a bigger blot than the one on our own. It is incumbent upon our honesty to recognize the standpoint of the negro not only in his view of life, but also in his crude efforts to appreciate it and to make the best of it.

Law administration among the primitive Congolese is a fairly developed system of government. There are courts high and low, from that of a head townsman with his agenda of petty larcenies and domestic squabbles up to the court of the king ; the court of final appeal, with its questions of life and death, judicial and political appointments, divorce, war, and foreign matters. There are councillors and advisers attached to each court, to command authority and to ensure respect. Criminal offences include adultery, theft, fetish sacrilege, murder, trespass, perjury, etc., besides affairs ethical, some of which have the sanction not only of the Decalogue, but of the Sermon on the Mount. These are matters which receive unequivocal judgment.

Bribery in some measure enters into the legal affairs of the community. The wonder is that it does not interfere more largely than it does. That law is a reality is abundantly manifest in the stocks seen on the legs of delinquents, and yokes on the necks of offenders. You can see fines being led by the neck in the form of pigs and goats to pay into the court which has gone against them.

A defendant may appeal against his sentence, but not if he is wise, for by the time he gets through with his case he is bankrupt, very much after the manner of his European co-defendant. It matters little whether a client's substance be gold, cloth, or live stock, lawsuits turn it into poverty, and poverty is very much the same thing to a negro as it is to any other being. Where wealth is counted in beads the loss of it spells starvation in the same way as the loss of wealth counted in bank-notes or bullion. Litigation eats it up with the same avidity in Congoland as it does in

northern latitudes and is, in both places, an unmistakable proof of its vitality and vivacity.

One of the first things an African traveller finds out is, that native law has thrown up a social bastion around every tribe and township, effectively blocking his advance until he has discovered which key will admit him. There is no way into the confidence of the people but the native way. That way is by arrangement and permission of the head-men. Negotiation is the word. To go in willy-nilly is to be absolutely ostracized. A rifle may command obedience, but it never commands goodwill, and goodwill is the only key to the heart of a savage. Diplomacy will apply for admission to, and freedom among the people whose law requires it, just as it would not possess arms, for example, in Great Britain without the authority of the law. With the approval of the negroes in power every avenue is open to the traveller, but without it he is abandoned in a way calculated to drive him mad if he is a *militaire*, or to despair if he is a civilian. We have known several hundred men sit for the greater part of a week on the question of our freedom of the country. Once the permission was granted we not only enjoyed the freedom, but, in a measure, the government of the whole area as well. Neither force nor presumption can produce an acceptation equal to that of respect for native law. The native way is the best way to get one's own way among the uncivilized tribes of Central Africa.

Congo Government rests on "three fire-stones," like the tripod which supports the native cooking-pots. *Makukwa tatu malamb' ekongo*, is a national saying which rings through negro society like the motto, "Liberté, Fraternité, Égalité," among the French. The "fire-stones" are: *Nsaku*, the "head," or the Prime Minister; *Sengele*, the "cutter," or the Chief Justice; *Mfutila*, the "payer," or Chancellor of the Exchequer. No Congo

sovereign or prince can rule without these three officers. They are the Privy Council which never includes a fourth. What they agree to the king ratifies. We have seen them develop into a dangerous hierarchy and also duly exploded by the force of Bantu public opinion and disgust.

All important chiefs possess a judicial sceptre called *mvwala*. It is the highest insignia of authority in negrodom. The one in our possession belonged to the prince, and is therefore of the best design and quality. It is made of ironwood perfectly rounded as if turned in a lathe or driven through a mould. Its polish is after the best technique. Its fantastic carvings are inlaid with lead as tastefully as if they had been done in silver. But its distinctive features are four knobs or bosses differing in size and position, each denoting an essential constituent in native ethics and law administration. The boss at the head of the sceptre is called the knob of MERCY, the next, nine inches below it, is the knob of ANGER, the third is the knob of JUDGMENT, the fourth is the knob of SLAVERY. The design stands for an order of thought particularly noteworthy in view of it being a product of thinking black. The best is first, the worst last. It is an order of merit which could hardly be improved at Westminster or in Washington. Mercy, Anger, Judgment, Slavery, but the first, the largest boss, the one nearly always in the hand of the judge is that of *mercy*—an element quite as conspicuous in judicial heathendom as it is in judicial Christendom.

A lawsuit at the king's court is of the most interesting character. We have witnessed prolonged battles between experts in traditional law and lore. Wit and humour sparkle in speeches like sunbeams in a channel. The main object of legal oratory appears to be to make the judge laugh. The success of a litigant largely rests upon his ability to outclass his opponent in things that tickle the sense. No case is serious enough to exclude the bubbles of mirth.

The lawyer who can step-dance his arguments and evidence, or sing his brief to music, is well on his way to fame. He who can chant and jig them at one and the same time is a first-class K.C. A supply of palm wine and pork is a necessary preliminary to litigation, a responsibility which every litigant discharges under the conviction that the way the authorities are fed plays as important a part in turning the scales of justice as any point of law or any force of evidence. The nearest way to a negro's judgment is often by way of the æsophagus. Feed him well and he is yours for ever, or until economic pressure moves his appetites to other spheres, or the touch of light shifts his conscience to higher levels. Congo forfeitures are nearly always in things suitable for the cooking-pot. Fines are edible articles, such as make the mouth of every African magistrate and advocate water. So that a Congo court scene is of a romantic composition. There is only one dais for judiciary and auditory—the ground, where they squat on their heels, or sit on anthills, chips of wood, or rest all square on the earth. The legal is divided from the lay by the skin of a wild beast, or a staff of office, or a mat of constitutional pretensions. There is a place for the drum and the demi-john. It is the court where the judge and attorney drink the wine of the plaintiff and eat the pig of the defendant, where barristers are minstrels, litigants are artists, and where the tribunal from the " bench " to the " bar," will literally dance out the facts of the case, and jazz the verdict.

Native lawsuits embrace a wide range of strange matters, from the tapping of another man's palm tree, to the taking of another man's wife, from the crime of body-snatching to the felony of soul-pilfering, from the cost of a bride to the expenses of a funeral, from the robbing of a hen roost to the charge of a capital offence. Very often the question is who drew first blood of a kill in the chase, or who gets the

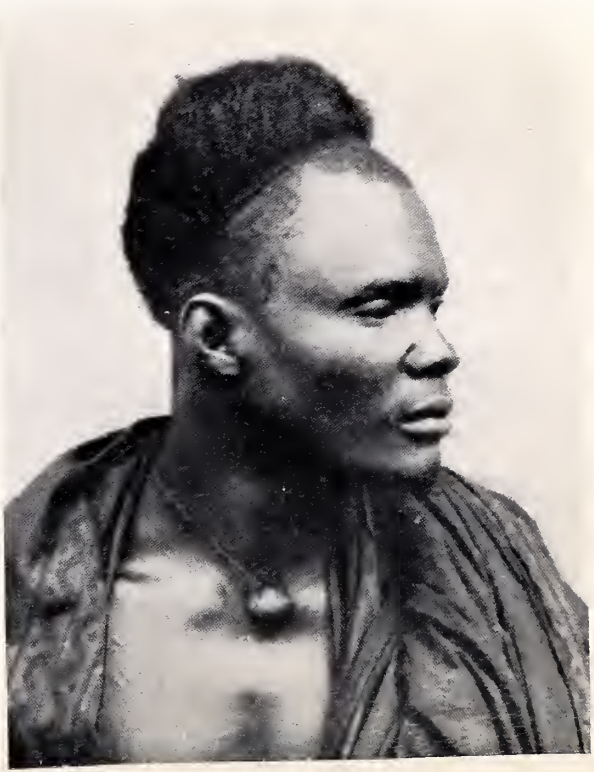
skin of a leopard and who gets its claws and its teeth. To whom are the horns of a beast to go, and to whom do the hoofs belong. Who is responsible for the twist in the eye of a child, or the bend in its legs, or the hump on its back, or the " knock " at its knees, and the " splay " in its feet. Why does one farm yield a hundredfold and the next only three-tenths of it. Are twins a blessing or a curse, a fortune or a misfortune. How is it that one family gets the measles and another only gets the mumps. There is nothing patent to negro life that is beyond the jurisdiction, sagacity, and patience of a negro court of law.

There is no constabulary among the primitive Ba-Congo. There is no need for it where every subject is an officer of the law. A negro is always jealous of his own interests and will unhesitatingly bring a defaulter to book without being a prig. The negro is not naturally spiteful. He has a keen sense of honour which, however, is enthusiastic for the traditions, customs, and laws of his race. He will even prosecute his fellow who disrespects them. There is a certain amount of safety in numbers, for where the eye of a neighbour is always open to a fault the other fellow tries to take care of the fault. Heathens have the human sense of discernment for sighting the " motes " in other eyes. Their own " beams " are transparent, in fact they are powerful lenses not only for detecting " motes," but for making them look like " beams." Of what use is a police force where every unit is a detective ?

When Minguedi Mebilama became head man in Tundwa he bought a pig to feast his people in celebration of the occasion. This pig was out early one morning scavenging on the outskirts of the town for things pigs delight in. A townsman on the same errand, hearing a movement in the bush fired into it blindly with the glee as of an " early bird catching the worm." Following the shot, he got a fright at the sight of some black hairs which caused him

EARRINGS AND EARLOBES.

Note how the weight of the ear-rings has distended the original small orifice in the lobe.



A CHARM.

The Mbwanga charm in action.

to suppose that he had shot a town pig. He then came upon some white hairs which indicated that it was a bush pig. A step or two further on he found more black hairs, which confirmed his fears that he had shot a domestic swine. That meant a big *nkanu* (lawsuit) for him if found out. He at once made tracks for the town by a circuitous route, to avoid being seen, reloading his gun as he went in order to prove an immature lie that it had not been fired that day. As he sat in his house fearfully waiting events, news came to Mebilama that his pig had been found shot in the bush. Now the question was: who shot the pig? To settle that query meant more than a pork feast to Mebilama and party. It meant the price of a new litter. It was evident that the gunman had lost the beast, otherwise it would have been carried off or hidden. Mebilama was equal to the problem. Standing in the middle of the town he called a hunt with a voice that could be heard in every house. He blew the whistle for the dogs, which came bounding to him from the hot dustheaps where Congo dogs sleep. "Come on, you fellows," shouted Mebilama, "some fool has shot a pig and hasn't the sense to cook it. Let us away after it." Hearing this, the man who had actually shot the pig thought he had made a mistake, that he had really killed a wild boar, which he stood to lose if he kept silent. Rushing out of the house, he exclaimed, "It's my pig, it's my pig. I shot it first thing this morning." Turning upon him, Mebilama philosophically remarked, "That being so, we must see that you pay for it." The poor fellow was what the natives call "burnt." To court he had to go, where he listened to an eloquent indictment against himself before paying the penalty. Next time, he plays the part of Mebilama at somebody else's expense.

Sometimes it takes the form of "tit for tat." They enter into it earnestly as a kind of competition in which everyone knows that the best wit will come off best man. Crowds

will assemble to hear and see a battle of experts before a judge, where each endeavours to vanquish the other with wit, quaint sayings, repartee and the like, even more than the evidence relative to the law on a matter of dispute. We have seen the judge so well pleased with both parties at the successful way they had entertained him that he hesitated to give the verdict against either.

The chief of Mbwela was one morning roasting bananas and pea-nuts when a neighbouring chief happened to come into the town. Now according to native law, for a chief to so occupy himself is actionable, because he is supposed to have slaves, children, or wives to do it for him. The visiting chief, who was also a chum, charged him with degrading their position and dignity. "All right," said the Mbwela chief, "an old man when guilty never argues" (prov.). Five days later he paid the usual fine : a demi-john of wine. When he had handed over the wine he requested his accuser to lend him a woman, or a boy, or a slave to cook his nuts. This startled the pursuer, because he knew the Mbwela chief to be a rich man and could not fail to see the meaning of the request. "I cannot do that," he hastily rejoined. "Then," said the other chief, who knew another shade of the native law, "you have dishonoured me by making it appear that I am a poor man. I have paid the wine of poverty. Now I will apply to the law to prove which is the greater crime—that a chief cook his own food when he wants to, or that a neighbouring chief scandalize his good name by showing that he is so poor that he is obliged to roast his own pea-nuts and bananas." Verdict—slander damages, viz. a pig and a demi-john of palm wine. Net profit to the chief of Mbwela, one pig. That is the native way of making law on one another.

Gracia Ekangu, of Zulumongo, had the depraved ambition to become a "witch," one of the greatest crimes in Congo-land. He unburdened his heart to a rich young man

named Kapata, of Ngombe, whom he surmised to be a "witch," on account of his wealth, which is supposed to be the fruits of witchcraft. Kapata was alarmed because he knew that to get a reputation as a member of the black circle meant execution, sooner or later. Next morning Gracia was brought before the judge and fined upwards of £42, or 50,000 beads and a pig. Where every man is a Sherlock Holmes law is a busy business.

Capital punishment is the legal penalty for adultery, kleptomania, and murder. It is never inflicted to-day where the imposition of it is likely to come to the cognizance of the rulers, because capital punishment is non-existent in Portuguese law. Where, however, there is a disposition to carry the penalty out there is ample scope to do it in secret. There are uplands and lowlands, mountains and gorges, unfathomed forest depths and unexplored jungle growth, where much could be done and indeed where much is done, unknown to those who live on the borders of them. A native of Kimbondo, in a fit of anger, killed Mumbembe's brother-in-law for having illegally set fire to the bush in his district. Native law says, "Whoever kills his fellow must pay for it with his own head." *Konso on'ovond' o nkw' andi ntwikila.* Again, murder, to the Congo mind, is "proof" positive that the murderer is a witch. No one but witches have a propensity for taking human life. Moreover, it is always a case which merits death of itself without reference to a witch priest. The murderer was taken to Madimba covered with palm and other leaves, besmeared with palm oil and burnt alive. Soba F., an acquaintance of ours, now dead, was present as a party to the deed. Mumbembe himself was threatened with the same fate for having, as his accusers put it, "sold" a boy to us "body and soul"—a capital crime according to Congo law. The man fled to us for protection, where he shared the freedom with the lad he had placed in our

charge. An eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth, a life for a life, is the traditional code of these people from time immemorial. Theft is a term which embraces a very wide range of meaning in Congo phraseology. Besides the ordinary signification of the word, it includes a spiritual pilfering also. It is conceded that a negro can walk off with the soul of another person as easily as a burglar carries away loot. The native word for this psychological plundering is *somona*. For instance, a man goes on a visit to another town. He becomes ill and unconscious. Such a man is said to be *somona*—bewitched, robbed of his soul, or that part of him which makes him a living being. He is no longer a "man." He is only *kafi*, or *evuvu*, i.e. a shell without a kernel, a body without spirit. He may live for a short time, but he will soon wither and die. His movements are only a kind of reflex action like those of a fowl after its head has been cut off. They soon cease. Some soulless bodies last longer than others according to the vitality of the person at the time his soul is taken from him, but in no other sense than that of a turtle which has been known to live for twenty-three days without a head, and six months without a brain. Soul-snatching is as vehemently proscribed among black men as body-snatching is among white men. In Congo the penalty of the crime is death by violence.

The scope of this spiritual larceny is unlimited. In the same way a felon may steal the best of everything without touching it. He may rob gardens without seeing them, filch merchandize without diminishing it, despoil houses without entering them, or purloin a whole carcass of meat without handling a joint or steak of it. No one but a negro knows how it is done, and he is the only man we know who has made provision against it. The people of Nkiendi killed an antelope and with the usual pomp carried it and deposited it in the centre of the town.

As the crowd stood round gazing at the beast, one man stooped and picked off some of the fresh soil which still adhered to its hoofs. He was straightway charged by the chief with the act of *somona*. The law was on the side of the chief, too. The man was condemned by a tribunal to pay a heavy indemnity. Thuswise does native jurisprudence pursue its subject far beyond a fishing in forbidden waters or hunting in forbidden preserves, or the spoliation of mere material, down to an embezzlement of "soul" or "soul stuff," spirits, and spiritual substances.

Adultery with a chief's wife is an unpardonable offence in the eyes of Congo law. Among commoners it is not viewed with the same gravity. Still, generally, the Ba-Congo are jealous of their women, and will filch and flay almost unreasonably at times if it suits their fancy to pursue an offender. Whether the law is rooted in a moral sense or in any other sense is not easy to determine, but whatever sense it be, the fruits of such a law clearly justify its existence. The idea has a value which is religious as well as legal. The purport of the latter may simply be propriety, but to the former it undoubtedly is a necessity. Chastity is a working condition of fetishism. If the wife is not chaste the husband cannot shoot straight in the hunting field, or make a fortune on the market, or shake off an attack of influenza, or overcome in the conflict with his enemies. She herself will nullify the power of her own charms, court any disease which happens to be floating about, risk the welfare of her children, turn her own fortunes into calamities, and induce a multitude of other unpleasant things to happen which theoretically cannot happen so long as she remains a faithful spouse. From every point of view, therefore, virtue is of supreme importance to the native, which accounts for the strenuous inducements on the one hand to maintain it, and on the other, rigorous penalties for any breach of it.

As a citizen, a Congo native is expected to respect authority. Folklore says, "a chief's voice is a flash of lightning." One is the highest form of electricity, the other is the highest form of law. Again, "A chief's finger cannot be thrust aside." His word is law. It must be obeyed. Then, too, those in authority are expected to inspire confidence. "A chief's finger cannot be thrust aside *except when it is poked in your eye.*" His word is law as long as it does not infringe the legitimate. Kings and governors have no right to poke their fingers into the eyes of anybody. Rulers have no right to command subjects to do wrong. A proverb says, "If a chief orders you to kill (unjustly), don't kill (that would be an irremediable wrong), apprehend him" (that would not be an irretrievable injury). A chief has dominion, but he must not abuse it. In native parlance, "his court must not be like a fowl-pen, where the birds show scant quarter to a cockroach which unwarily ventures into it, or which may be blown in by the wind." He should not "pluck a feather which ought not to be plucked." "Injustice soon destroys a country." Justice becomes injustice when it "makes two wounds on a head which only deserves one." He must never "eat a one-eared pig," i.e. it is not his business to only hear one side of a lawsuit. He must not be partial. Furthermore, might is not always right even in the ethics of heathendom, because "a strong thief can often kill the man he robs." Representatives of the law must use discretion. He must "not kill every ant" indiscriminately, "but go straight for the one which has bitten him." His duty is to "punish the one who breaks the pot, not the one who only reports how it was done."

As a member of society the Congo negro is expected to conform to the essentials upon which the society exists. If a man is mad they tie him in the stocks and society is safe. Freeman or slave, he is bound to keep within the limits

which the conditions of his society impose upon him. He is dependent upon others: "the bean creeper winds itself round the grass, the grass twines itself round the creeper." Human beings are in close association with one another. They must support each other. Put in the native way it is, "we all turn to where the moon rises." "We are like hair on a dog's back: we lie one way and we lie together." The folly of one will involve others. "A crime committed by a co-wife brings trouble on the other wives." "All the fruit growing on one branch moves if you move the branch." "The curse of one man may cause the curse of a hundred." "One finger often scatters the nuts, but one finger never gathers them together again." "We plough together, we sow together, and when the crops ripen we will share the harvest." "One man can't make war." That is how tradition teaches the negro how to make for the *summum bonum* of life-happiness.

On the other hand, cruelty to brutes stands on the debit side of Congo ethics. The way they tie a fowl in a basket is enough to make a tender heart sad for many a day. Boys make living kites of stag beetles and birds. The Zombolese beat their pigs and goats to death in order that the flesh may be well infiltrated with blood for culinary effect. Hunters cut off the ears of their dogs to "improve their sagacity." It is only a whim born of the same sense as that which leads other men to cut off a dog's tail to "improve its beauty." There is no more reason for cutting a piece off one end of a dog than off the other. There is a class of natives which answers to another class which delights in bull-baiting, cock-fighting, coursing, etc., in other lands. At the same time there are other negroes who approach the benevolence of Frank Bullen, who wrote *Creatures of the Sea*, and of Leonardo da Vinci, who bought caged birds for the pure joy of setting them at liberty.

All black men do not kick every dog that comes to sniff about their feet.

The theory of pure native warfare is worth knowing. We have witnessed two conflicts. The Ba-Congolese do not fight without an effort to settle the dispute some other way. They do not fight until diplomacy has failed. The head men meet to discuss the matter. They recognize no *casus belli* until after this conference. The moment it fails the diplomats start the fight at once, on the spot, in pugilistic fashion. The idea of war lords knocking each other about over the conference table is not without its advantages. It brings home to those responsible for war some of the sensations of the fray in realistic form. The Congo idea is to draw first blood. The blood is the signal to get the guns. But no armed force can set out to attack an enemy without giving due warning that it is actually on the warpath. There must be no flank attack, no ambuscade, no surprises, no *coup de main.* That is the way of thieves and robbers. They must meet to fight in a prearranged place. There is no night attack. Only when the enemy is defeated on the *luala*, fighting pitch, can a conqueror advance to burn, kill, and loot ahead. They stop when the first man is shot, to begin again only after his funeral. Left to himself the native does not often offend to the point of war. His anger is of short duration. More often than not he will suffer the indignities offered him rather than carry it to the extreme, an object lesson which would be useful in higher civilization. Genuine African warfare can give points to northern militarists.

In African madness there is method, in heathendom there is law, laws and methods which attract and focus the faint particles of light which are floating about in African darkness, as diamonds catch, hold, and reflect the glints of light straying about in a dungeon.

CHAPTER XIX

Skilled Arts & Crafts

CONGO arts and crafts are like everything else of Congo origin, crude and ancient. Nevertheless, they are the beginnings of precisely those things which civilization has developed from the same primitive designs to high standards of excellency and proficiency. Whatever any section of the human race has attained to beyond its savage state, it has, so far as is known, progressed along a line common to the tendencies of all civilization. The ascent has been fairly uniform wherever growth has been registered. In food, man has stepped from wild berries to the extremes of culinary art. In dress, he has gone from raw hides, plant tissues, and straw to wool, silk, linen, and ermine. In habitat, he has moved from caves, holes in the ground, soil structures on land, and piled dwellings in rivers, to stone cottages, villas, and mansions. In fire, and combustion, he has progressed from flint and tinder, wood friction, and brimstone, to electricity and radium. In weapons and utensils he has travelled from the Stone and Bronze Ages to the age of Bessemer steel, silver, and gold. In language, he has advanced from picture-writing and hieroglyphics to phonetic signs and alphabets. In art he has passed from crude animal drawings pictured on stone and bone to " The Night Watch," by a Rembrandt, and " The Assumption," by a Rubens. In doctrine or dogma he has risen from belief in magic to a faith in Christ, whilst in practice he has prospered from the adoration of heavenly bodies to the worship of heavenly deities.

The course of the negro then lies straight along the route taken by all primitive people. "Notwithstanding their rudimentary estate," says Professor Drummond, "the people of Africa have the beginnings of all the more characteristic things that make up the life of civilized man. No new thing is found here that is not in some form in modern civilization; no new thing in civilization but has its embryo and prophecy in the simpler life of these primitive tribes. To the ignorant these men are animals, but the eye of evolution looks on them with a kindlier and more instructed sense. They are what we were once, possibly they may become what we are." That is the Christian view as well as the view of science. There is no doubt that the African will attain to where the Grand Architect has destined that he should attain. His progress since the day of his discovery to Europe is a proof that he is following the line of march taken by the highest races of mankind.

In the matter of useful arts and crafts there is not so much need or room for originality on the part of the black man since those of civilization are now at his disposal. He will imitate and assimilate rather than create or invent. He may be handicapped by five ounces less brain than a white man, but what he has we know to be capable of the very finest development.

The African has long discovered ore and worked metals, a fact which places him far ahead of the river-drift man of the Thames valley or the cave man of Kent's Hole. Examination will show the negro to have passed through the Flint and Stone Ages like the primitive men of the Old World, but to-day he is certainly found with a comparatively advanced knowledge not only of metals but also of their manufacture into articles of use and ornament. The art may have filtered through from Egypt, for a specimen of iron in the British Museum connects the African fabrication of the metal with the pyramids from which the relic was

blasted. Who can say that the ring in the nose of the cannibal, the spiral bangle on the arm of the savage, or the spearhead in the hand of the tropical warrior does not bear some historical relation to the age of iron among the ancients of the north?

Among the Congolese, iron to-day is as valuable as it was when the Greeks used it as prizes in their funeral games, or when an English sovereign counted his pots and pans among his jewels. The art is no longer in its elementary stage. The Congo negro's achievements in iron are very often of first-class quality, even without taking into consideration the very pristine tools with which he executes them. He forges spears, arrows, hoes, knives, musical instruments, chisels, gongs, etc., many of them of extraordinarily fantastic designs, but of a standard which we know from practical experience, would frequently excel the workmanship of a European smith. The test of good smithing is the work done with a hand hammer, not with a file. Work from the anvil not from the vice shows the best quality of labour and the skill of the labourer. There are negro smiths second to none in this branch of manufacturing arts.

We possess two musical instruments—the *mingenge* and the *ngonge*, both of which would do credit to the skill of anyone versed in the use of malleable metals. Two ends of the former instrument are pointed like a pair of compasses so cleverly executed that the points are almost perfect, whilst the hammer marks show only the slightest impression. The other ends are bevelled like the edge of a chisel with a temper almost as fine. It is a rare specimen of primitive craft in metals. The *ngonge*, which we now use as a dinner gong, is hammered into a horse-shoe form, perfectly welded in the breech. It has two bell-shaped resonators at the extremities, each of two parts, which are also welded the length of four inches. Its notes, a pure

A sharp and C natural, treble clef, are a wonderful evidence of its excellent finish at the forge.

The better craftsmen produce razors shaped like tiny spades with an edge as fine as Gillette blades, though, of course, of much inferior temperature. Still, they shave the scalp as well as the chin as effectively as the edge of a piece of superior steel. We have seen the native adze curved like a felloe made for scooping out the interior of tree-trunks for flour mortars, or for hollowing out canoes, with an edge that would go through the hardest knot without turning, as if it had been one of our own tools, at 491° F. Naturally, these implements have neither the lustre nor the finish of those made in Sheffield or Birmingham to-day, but they are in many respects superior to those of England before the time of the Romans. We presume, that as the one has progressed from the humblest beginnings to the highest productions of the art, so the other may one day register a similar history. The blades of their spears are both highly burnished and highly ground, whilst in not a few the film of oxide is the pale blue of a watch-spring, indicative of keen temper and resistance.

The Congolese also collect brass from various foreign sources which they turn into serpent rings for the finger, toe, arm, or leg; anklets, necklets, waistlets, and such-like articles of decoration, sometimes beautiful in design and moulding. The engravings found upon some of their brass and iron fabrications might well lead us to the signet on the plate of pure gold or the onyx stones of the time of Moses could we but trace the craft perfectly. The designs on knife blades, spearheads, leglets, and other things are marvels of execution and precision.

Sometimes attractive patterns are cut in wood, usually ironwood, into which they run lead with quite an artistic effect in such things as walking-sticks. Who shall say but that the negro's knowledge of smelting and metal working,

though far removed from a Siemen's system, marks the dawn of the modern world in his craftsmanship as it did for the artisan in Europe? To-day the African forges a hoe, to-morrow he will forge a plough. The same forces which turn his swords into ploughshares and his spears into pruning-hooks will also convert his hand crucibles into blast furnaces and his elementary wonders into wonders of classical science.

The chief craft of the Congolese is the manufacture of fetish images. It is not chief in the sense of being a principal popular occupation, because it is particularly a craft of the specialist. Only a few control the profession. Its importance lies in the use not in the manufacture of the articles. Because the sphere of the image is solely religious it takes the premier place in their handicrafts. It is easily first in matters of imaginary necessity and usefulness, but it is easily last in questions of design and workmanship.

None of the images are beautiful. Most of them are hideous. They are precisely the faces which used to haunt us in our youthful dreams. They are maimed, crippled, deformed. Some give prominence to the breasts, others emphasize the nose and lips. A good proportion of them are without legs. In the facial expressions you see the lewd, the grave, the comical, the demoniacal, the tragic, the brutal, the stupid, but never the attractive or the angelic. A very large number are positively indecent. All of them are unlovely. They are made for occult purposes; designs which are truly stamped in their form and finish. Though invariably bent at the knees as if in supplication the lips are sensual, the ears are asinine, the nose is snub and lustful, the head is idiotic and lecherous. They are devoid of all taste except the base. They possess no shade of delicacy, but that which answers to a savage nature.

The most beautiful craft of the Congolese is their work in ivory. They excel in carving. Wherever the art came

from, and again we find it in the age of Moses, it certainly claims the attention of anyone dealing with native life of the present. In this branch of art there is ample corroboration of Sir H. Johnston's observation of a " strong artistic impulse . . . which might lead these people far in adding to the world's store of beautiful designs and inventions, if only it receives an intelligent encouragement."

We possess an image which is, indeed, a real work of art. We believe it was made to ornament a white man's table and not for a black man's magic. It is a little figure of ivory, five and a half inches high, with its hands in its pockets. Its dress represents a sort of negro-European cut. The cloth is perfectly the native taste even down to its check. The collar is a " Shakespeare," the jacket a " three-seamer," the hat a kind of " smoker." Perhaps it is an attempt to represent an official ; but the hair, lips, nose, bare feet, and general expression are undeniably negroid. As a fetish it is far beyond the wealth of the average native. As an ornament it is an excellent sample of primitive handicraft, a product of good intelligence and subtle skill.

On the same plane of excellence are found models of elephants, crocodiles, vases, rings for the fingers, and for table napkins, paper knives, and many other articles tastefully worked from the tusks of hippos, elephants, and wart hogs. The moulding is wonderfully accurate, giving evidence of a keen observation and knowledge of animal anatomy in the production of appropriate nicknacks. On a tusk, only two feet long, we have seen as many as forty-seven different representations ranging from an insect to a mammoth, from a man to a baboon. It marks an advance in art for the negro far beyond the period of painted pebbles and serrated harpoons of Azilian Europe, for, indeed, the flowers, plants, fruit, and animal portraitures neatly chiselled, sometimes on the smallest possible area, often rank in dexterity and finish with

similar productions by Chinese, Indians, and Japanese, who are world-famed experts in this department.

The most useful craft of the Congolese is the weaving and plaiting of grass cloth. Of the things that are prolific in Central Africa bush grass takes the first place. Millions of tons grow every year and are burnt down as regularly as the seasons follow each other. It is out of all proportion to anything else that grows there. It grows without any apparent use either for man or beast. What little is made use of by the native is taken at different stages of maturity and used as house thatch, sleeping-mats, or personal clothing. With it they make dinner plates, pudding dishes, drinking-cups, which have at least one redeeming virtue; it is unbreakable kitchen ware. They turn it into artistic little baskets with lids and handles to match, all of which is a work of great merit. Some of the African grass—esparto—we have seen tipped into huge boilers north of the Forth and come out at the other end of the factory between glazed cylinders, a pure white ceaseless yield of paper. That seems to indicate that science might convert the African jungle from a perennial nuisance into an inexhaustible article of commerce.

Congo mat-making takes us to what was, perhaps, the very first practice in the art of weaving. Fibres of equal length are laid on the ground with each end fastened to a stick. The strands are then interlaced by cross threads, one by one, until the mat is finished. The borders are secured by a special plait which prevents fraying. These mats are the most popular article in Congoland. Every native must own one as a matter of necessity. It is an important factor of negro etiquette to offer one to a visitor who happens to be without one at nightfall, which they do with the same sense of propriety and friendship as we would offer a bed. In fact, the mat is the black man's bed. By the same process and with the same material they

manufacture sacks of a very useful order similar to our own article in size and capacity. Set out in panels these mats give a very pleasing effect on the walls of European dwelling-houses.

Native cloth introduces us to the finer phases of the art where we meet with loom and shuttle of quite a superior though primitive make. There is no heddle or treadle; just two simple rollers which hold the warp. On the simplest of looms we have seen cloth woven with warps and wefts of the finest native texture, as closely woven as if driven with a batten of steam. Some of it is almost as fine as Indian silk. We use it as drawing-room curtains, the length being obtained by joining the standard measurement of about fifteen by eighteen inches, which is the average length of the material they work with.

The Congo native has gone a stage beyond the ordinary art to that of pattern weaving. True, the patterns are not elaborate, but they are nearly always tasteful, except those which represent animals, which are nearly always distortions or rather caricatures. On the better cloth the designs are remarkably good and pleasing. There is seldom a flaw. Some of it is beautifully ribbed on the "right" side, having the appearance and touch of superior garbicord. The designs are worked with fibres dyed various colours, which brings us to another valuable section of native industry.

The art and practice of dyeing among the Ba-Congo are no more advanced than they were among the Egyptians and the Phœnicians, but we should scarcely think that they lack any of the dexterity to which those arts attained among those ancient peoples. Native achievements are of a high order. The dyes are produced solely from vegetable juices. Leaves, roots, fruits, or anything yielding a coloured liquid, are pounded, boiled, steeped, dried, or otherwise treated as required, the result being substances of different

A Village Industry.

The articles range in size from a match box to a corn bin.

BASKET-MAKING.

These basket are of the best quality and workmanship, and are intended to be carried on the back, secured to the shoulders by a band of knitted fibre.

hues with a density, permanence, and beauty apparently equal to those distilled from coal tar. There is not the same variety of tints as in aniline dyes though the material may be there in which a greater genius than that of the native may discover them, but what they have are of such shades and quality as to render their work both attractive and valuable. Black, like its coal tar twin, is perhaps the best of native dyes in strength and durability, for it has properties somewhat akin to jetoline in density and penetration. African colours woven into African fabrics, by African experts, will eventually be found among some of the most wonderful combinations, not only in primitive art and manufacture, but in the arts and manufactures of more highly gifted races.

With their spinning the Congolese are still in furthest antiquity. That is to say, it is with distaff and spindle the negro twists his fibres into cotton, yarns, threads, string, and rope. He fastens a berry on the spindle which acts as a whorl in giving weight to the fibres he is twisting and momentum as well as firmness to the twist. In this way it is only possible to produce a single thread at a time, a result which is very primitive and insignificant indeed when compared with one man's production of two thousand or more threads at a time on the automatic spinning machinery of to-day. Native cotton as a finished article is more after the thickness of thin string, and from much handling is usually the colour of cobbler's twine, but, as they have needles and mending to match, these characteristics are not unduly imposing. The importation of foreign cloth now provides them with a much finer filament than they can spin, so that, where you would have seen a negro twirling his threads in prehistoric fashion you may now find him drawing them from calico, blue baft, or red twill, in regions where these manufactures have gained access. This, indeed, is the origin of the pretty frills worked on

the native *pau*, which is a female's dress of limited dimensions, but the most elaborately worked article of native attire in foreign material.

Rope-making is a flourishing craft, especially among the Zombos. The skin of forest vines, of the mid-ribs of the palms, or the fibres of anything else capable of being turned into skeins, are stripped off, dressed, dried, soaked, and made pliable, then twisted into rope-yarns as neatly though not as firmly as a spinning-wheel spins hemp. These are made into cordage of three-eighths or half an inch thickness which is in great demand by all who carry loads for a living as every carrier needs a rope with which to secure his load in his palm-branch basket. The rope is serviceable for what it is intended to do, but would not do so well for strenuous service, owing to the small degree of twist it has, the resultant of the slow velocity at which it is made. With the finer yarns they crochet trim little skullcaps, satchels, or shoulder bags, shaped like miniature nose-bags for horses, in which they carry food, fetish, or oddments such as the negro soul delights in.

Congo pottery is mainly of the same class as the old Celtic and Saxon pottery as represented by their urn-shaped vessels, tapering from the centre downwards to the base and upwards to the lips which overlap, having an inner bevel round a very wide mouth. Considering the antiquity of the art in the African continent, one would perhaps expect a greater variety of this sort of ware than is actually found in the Congo region. It is chiefly confined to cooking utensils and water-pots, although a few tribes on the upper reaches of the river produce one or two models similar to some found among the ancient common black pottery of the Greeks, such as fire bowls and vases. They have a style of ornamentation, which, for the most part consists of simple zigzag lines or a sort of herring-bone design intermixed with ribs, bosses, indentation, or punc-

tures almost identical with that of the old English manufactures. The simplicity of the patterns and the neatness with which they are executed are certainly more agreeable than those European paintings which represented humans with tails and gods with cloven hoofs on water-pans or terra-cotta tubs.

The ceramic art of some of the Congolese tribes has even advanced as far as glazing and panelling. We have in our possession a vase resembling the Roman-British article with uniform panel depressions on the bulb, from the top of which, a long neck gracefully curves inward to a small but artistically overlaid mouth. It is covered with a rich brown glaze. As a work of old art it would decorate any table in civilization with as much grace as some of those we read of as adorning the table of Pericles.

Wicker-work and basket-making are known and practised by Congo craftsmen, though the art is confined, as in other branches of labour, merely to the supply of simple utensils required by their plain mode of life. Fish-traps, corn-bins, drying-racks, food baskets, flour sieves, animal cages, etc., are skilfully manufactured, many of them with a design and finish not beaten in a modern factory. We venture to say that the best of their flour sifters which are shaped very much like a campania vase without the handle will compare favourably in workmanship and style with the best cane-made article sold on English markets. The same is true of a native basket, which resembles an office waste-paper basket, a use to which white men usually apply it; whilst the basket which a Congo woman carries on her back is also of the best possible quality and make. Their fish-traps are not only cleverly made but ingeniously modelled, allowing the unsuspecting fish to swim in, but preventing it swimming out.

In the art of imitating the African negro is expert. He will copy the latest designs in straw hats with a grass of

like nature, and with a perfection which might easily deceive an experienced shopwalker. He can turn out a panama variety of a texture and style almost identical with the genuine article. In addition to his own native clay pipes we have seen him reproduce the meerschaum mouthpiece and the rosewood bowl in stone and animal horn, curved in the stem, with the pipe head accurately set in a carved hand fixed with the usual ferule at the joint to suit the most approved taste of the connoisseur.

What the negro has accomplished in his savage state gives evidence of an innate capacity and aptitude for something greater, higher, and better in the world's mechanical attainments which, under the careful nurture and tuition of the more highly cultured races will assist him to a position and prominence in the arts and crafts of mankind to which his primitive achievements entitle him.

CHAPTER XX

Native Music

IN his simple way the Congo native is an accomplished musician. We use the masculine gender because music is peculiarly man's profession in Congoland. Women dance and sing, men supply the music. As a rule native women do not play musical instruments. Occasionally they may play the *ngonge*, but it is rare. It is the men who beat the drums, thrum the zithers, blow the trumpets, thumb the metallophone, trill the castanets ; in fact, they do everything there is to be done with things they call musical. We have seen women playing the trumpets, but that is the exception. They usually supply the complements : jigs and choruses. Men manufacture the instruments and perform the music. The negro is what one may call a true artist though his sphere is the humblest. He loves music for itself. He makes his instruments for his own pleasure. Instruments of music are not made, stocked, and retailed as in other countries. They are not hawked as marketable articles. They are made for personal delight. Some trade the *biti*, but it is on a small scale. Ancient though the instruments are they possess the orthodox charms for the souls that make them and delight themselves in them.

A Congo musician is a person of some distinction among his fellows. Native music is an art in which very few are skilled. Not many develop it to its utmost. The foreigner is apt to despise their simple efforts at music, both instrumental and vocal, but we venture to say no foreigner,

without very arduous and continuous practice, if then, could approach their genius, their originality, and their perfection, with such instruments as they have.

The native musician is master of the art as he knows it. It is, of course, extremely primitive, and his expression of it is equally primitive, because his conception of it is antique. They are still in the age of Jubal. In the harp variety they have not attained to the ancient Phœnician ten strings, or even the Syrian eight strings. They do not exceed four. The resonator of the Congo string instrument is perhaps a little more elaborate than the triangular lyre of Samuel's day. As a sound-box it is excellent. We are no connoisseur of its Cremonan or Stradivarian quality, but players of considerable merit who have heard its response, not to the vibrations of catgut, but of ordinary palm strands as strings, are astounded at its richness and purity of tone. Of the " organ " variety the Congolese have a keyboard of at least eleven notes. That is the limit of their notation. In the trumpet order they are a long long way behind the silver, bell-mouthed articles which the priests blew when the ark was fixed in the temple at Solomon's dedication. They have, however, improved somewhat upon the ram's horn which the priests blew at the fall of Jericho. The Congo trumpet is ivory, the tusk of the elephant, which gives a rich mellow note. As blown by the natives, a band of them together, they are not melodious.

There is an attempt at harmony in some of the Congo music which is not only agreeable, but, on some instruments, is even rich ; a wonder of wonders when it is remembered that the harmony is produced with flutes which have no scale, trumpets which have no valves or slides, harps without keys, and fiddles without turnscrews. Wagner himself could hardly play his own *Lohengrin* with his two thumbs. Nor would he expect anybody else to do justice to *Tannhäuser* with a ram's horn. When we talk of Congo music

then we are in the age possessing no system of notation, where there is nothing but the bird, the insect, the water brook, and the wind to denote the rise and fall of musical strains. That is where the native is a master of the art, in producing tones and harmonies from the primeval instruments he has invented. Considering what he is and the surroundings in which he lives, they are results quite as wonderful, relatively, as the productions of high musical accomplishment on highly perfected instruments, when judged by the ultimate criterion to which the art has attained. The probability is that the sons of Asaph did not know the language of music as the modern masters know it. The Congolese do not know it even as Asaph and his colleagues, Heman and Jeduthun, knew it. Yet it is true that each party has cultivated the art to the best of their respective knowledge and ability.

We believe Handel would have found music in the Congo *nsambi*. He certainly would have found it in the *biti*. The instrument is the germ of his own violin and harpsichord. Schubert would have seen and heard his own piano in embryo in the Congo *madiumba*. Masters of music could no more have missed what is true in the crude musical products of the heathen mind than Dr. Warneck could miss a tiny moral in a mass of superstition, or Mungo Park could overlook a bit of moss in a tropical jungle, or Darwin could pass over a common earth worm in a universe of life.

David is reputed to have rendered excellent music with a very plain instrument which has been likened to a carpenter's square with eight or nine strings stretched across it. What David could have done with forty-eight strings and an ingenious seven-pedal mechanism on an instrument too big to get under his arm, must remain unknown. The contrast is an aid to our study of the musical genius of the negro.

With instruments still more inferior than those of Old Testament fame, the Congolese can do "cunning things." The wild and sometimes frantic excitement of the natives is not to be wondered at. Their music is calculated to move the gravest temperament. At one time it is weird in the extreme when it makes the nerves tingle with unearthly sensations. At another time it is sentimental and carries one away to mental scenes which leave one sad when they have faded away. Now it is melancholy. It puts a weight on the soul. Then it is wanton when it makes men see fire and feel it in their bones. Happiness, misery, sadness, wickedness, hope, contentment, all are found in Congo music.

It is not in their trumpeting or in their drumming that we hear the best of their music. It is when they play the *nsambi*, the *biti*, the *madiumba*, which are capable of true symphony; "a consonance, or harmony of sounds agreeable to the ear," as the dictionary says. To an African traveller in the bush, far away from organs, orchestras, and regimental bands, the sound of a native *biti*, or even a drum, has its charms. Drum performances are apt to become a nuisance, although some writers have spoken of drum language as "rather melodious." After all, nobody regards a drum as the basis of music. A drum is no more a criterion of music than a cottage loaf is of architecture.

The Congo native is a veritable wizard in the way he gets music out of things. His success is sometimes amazing. Sticks, stones, water-reeds, animal skins, tree-trunks, palm-rinds, split cane, grass tubes, string, seeds, and seed-pods, iron, beads: he applies them all to a musical service. Anything he can blow a note out of, from a stem of grass to a horn; or anything he can strum, from a length of twine to a palm fibre or a bamboo strand, gives him inexpressible pleasure. Anything he can beat, from a log to

A Witch Doctor.

UPOTO DANCING GIRLS.

The boys are playing on tom-toms.

DRUMS.

Drummers and dancers assembled to pay honour to the dead.

a drum, he puts his whole soul into getting what music he can out of it.

Sir H. Johnston has said of the pygmies that "The melodies they invent are sometimes charming to European ears, and their sense of rhythm and tune is highly developed." The same may be said of the Ba-Congo. The melodies they invent are charming. When he has hammered the stays into a musical length and temper, and set them in a suitable resonator, the Congo native can make music fly off from an old umbrella frame. That is genius. He strums agreeable strains from strings of the consistency and appearance of bootlaces, from semicircular and rectangular boxes of wood softer than deal. He pipes from inedible berries the size of apples. He makes bells of wood, gongs of metal, rattles of nutshells, musical-boxes of gourds, whistles of cane segments, all of considerable merit in design and workmanship, as well as in musical competency.

Congo instruments are doubtlessly destined to go the way of the ancient pan-pipes, lyre, and harp. Sea-shells as resonators are bound to give place to better models as education advances. As the African soul improves, its musical thought and expression will improve also. At the moment her music is where her morals are, low, but in a state of transition. Congo people have, up to the present, done the best they can in both, and, of course, are as far from Bach in the one as they are from the Apostle Paul in the other. Their music, like their theology, is capable of vast improvement, but also, like their theology, there are some wonderfully good things. The change will come. Fiddle-strings will change from vegetable matter, as they come to appreciate the finer difference in tone. Where they now use the plectrum they will then use a mechanism, just as we have replaced the clavicord and spinet with the "grand" piano. Out of their pandean pipes will come the flute, the oboe, and the organ. From the horn they

will pass to the cornet, the clarinet, and the euphonium. They will not invent them, they will adopt them.

The mechanical proficiency with which the native executes his work is also noteworthy. It recalls that of the "organ beater" when he manipulated the keyboard by striking the keys with his fist or pressed them down with his elbows. The negro plays his "piano" with his thumbs. The "swell" is a hole in its back which he covers and uncovers with his finger, according to his taste. The effect is delightful. His most dramatic passages on his fiddle are when he plays all the strings simultaneously. He does not finger the strings on the neck. Indeed there is no neck. He holds the strings with the thumb and the three next fingers, on the under-side. He does not press one string at a time as he wants a note higher or lower. He presses them all together, releasing now one, now two, then all four, according to the tune he is playing. A string has but one note. His work is to modify the vibrations. Instead of a bow he uses a *palheta*. His performances are very pleasing.

The negro is none the less wonderful in the manner of his performances. We have seen him play instruments in almost every conceivable position, except standing on his head. He carries his piano (*biti*) in his hair or attached to his belt, his fiddle on his head or on his back, his *ocarina* round his neck or round his wrist. He is the minstrel of the caravan, the town entertainer, the professional for funerals, festivals, law assemblies, religious rites, and so forth. He drums with his wrists and fingers, never with drumsticks. By way of variation he travels over the whole surface of the vellum and raps out tattoos of perfect rhythm. Drumheads are not adjusted by means of hoops, ropes, and buff braces; they are held in position either with wood nails or a network of cane from face to face all round the body of the drum. It is tightened and tuned

with gum or grime daubed in the centre, moulded by heat which helps to draw the skin taut to the required pitch.

Drums and other instruments range in action from pianissimo to fortissimo. It depends upon the mental state of the musician. They are capable of anything between "adagio" and a "gallop." A full band of nine can give a trillo or a trumpet, a solo or a chorus, either *infuriante* or *douloureux*. To the strains they sing, chant, yell, or even weep, whatever tallies with the occasion.

The attraction of every festival is a troupe of musicians who rub soot on their faces, chalk and camwood powder on their bodies, and dress themselves in an extraordinary array of multi-coloured checks. Rude songs and rude dances before the finish of the fête usually spoil what otherwise would not be a bad effort for heathens. They have an official repertoire, the equivalents of European airs, polkas, waltzes, jigs, and quartettes. The tune decides the dance, from a one-step to a quaint kind of goose step. Many of them might be termed whirligigs, for they make the hips tremble as if actually gyrating, giving a whirling sensation to any foreigner looking on. They play a weird accompaniment to a dance very much like a treadmill action, or a military mark-time movement. They have music which makes the arms and legs fly in all directions. Other tunes develop physical vibrations which make the long dance skirts whirl like a centrifuge in motion. Some selections give time for head dances, shoulder drill, chest exercise, as though the whole of their musical attainments existed as a mere auxiliary to gymnastics, in which every part of one's physical anatomy was provided for. We have heard of English dances called "wiggle-woggle," "red pepper," "lobster promenade," and the "bogey-walk," but of the real "wiggle-woggle," etc., the African native is the only author.

The majority of these performances is of the bedlam and the bacchanalian variety. They put the devil into the heart and the limbs more often than they introduce the happy peri. There are heathens in every land who delight in degrading music, either by making it or applauding the making of it. To them it stands more for a physical than a spiritual sensation. It gluts the sense rather than ministers to the soul. But in Congoland, as elsewhere, such music leans most on the drum side, that is to say, the noisiest side, the side least expressive, the least refined. A heathen in morals is usually a heathen in music, and vice versa, which means a decided taste for drum music. Music is not the proper word for it. Let us leave it at that.

They excel at funerals where dancing is the chief attraction. Seldom, if ever, is it indicative of sorrow and bereavement. The band, however, never omits the orthodox dirge for the comfort of those who truly mourn. It is weird music, appropriate to calamity, grief, and despair. In some of their compositions in minor they can drop one's feelings a degree or two lower than one registers when listening to the "Dead March" in *Saul*. They make one feel the weight of the world's woe and leave anything but a beautiful impression in the soul when they play to one about death.

On closer acquaintance it is found that Congo music is remarkably independent of dancing. The better instruments are very rarely used to accompany it. We are glad it is so because the Congo dance is not beautiful. The majority of them are obscene. The drum is the basis of their dancing. They complement each other.

Their music proper is very different. The native can produce the soft mellow tones of the flute without a flute, the sweet notes of the dulcetone without a dulcetone, the rich dulcet sounds of the saxhorn or violin on musical inventions having no resemblance whatever to those instru-

ments. Both their playing and their instruments show that they have gone to the fount of all art for their music—Nature. They imitate the beetle and the bee on the wing. The way they finger or thumb their strings gives the variations in tone which denote the rise and fall of the insects. On the ivory horns they can represent the trumpeting of the elephant, the lowing of the bull buffalo, or the yapping of the wild hyena. They are not able to do what W. Locke's "beloved vagabond" said he could do to the heart of a dead municipal council or to a hospital of paralytics, extract the one and set the other a-dancing, but it is not an exaggeration to say that they can make the "flesh creep" or the heart dance, according to the mood they are in when they play. They draw away from home not only children, like the Pied Piper of Hamelin, but men and women as well. Players can express the wedding feeling precisely. They cannot exactly give a European a vision of flags, rosettes, bunting, nosegays, silks, and parasols, as, say a "Black diamond band," or an Austrian orchestra, but they can give the finishing touch to an African scene of triumphal arches of palm fronds, plantain leaves, boughs, and mosses, relieved with grasses, forest ferns, wild flowers, and creepers.

When we speak of Congo music we are thinking of the lonely traveller who plays to make his heart glad in the vast solitude of his journey, of the minstrel who plays to keep up the strength of the caravan for the last hour of a twelve-hour day under a ninety-five pound load each head, of the weary stranger who talks with his instrument for news of his native land, and to aid his memory back to familiar scenes among his own kith and kin, of the soldier who keeps up his spirits with airs he learnt in his own town, of the prisoner who seeks to soothe his sorrows with echoes from his days of freedom, and of the many others who pick, or strum, or twang, or blow messages out of the simplest things for the sake of the pure delights they

bring to their burdened souls. These are the people who can appreciate better things as they come to them, or as they are introduced to them.

As a vocalist the native is not a success. As a professional among his own people he is a person of considerable renown. There are soloists at all musical functions. Even the dirge, that low, melancholy, minor wailing of the bereaved, which no pen can describe or tongue tell, is led by the *prima donna* of the mourners. They put nearly every phase of their curious life, nearly every grain of their activity and experience into song, from a lullaby to a religious chant, from a pastoral melody to a hymn of grief, from a jig to a funeral lament.

The theme alone is given in their songs, although harmony is well known among them. Indeed, their harmony is often superior to the early attempts made in Europe which followed immediately upon the Ambrosian songs A.D. 374, or even later, as late as Pope Gregory's melodies. Even up to the tenth century the monks who were the best musicians could produce nothing which in any way agrees with what is considered harmony to-day. Accompaniments moved up and down automatically and monotonously with the air. Not a note independent of it was thought of at that time. The natives give variations to their songs, often very pleasant and harmonious, by joining in the singing at various appropriate parts of the song.

As bards they are as ancient as they are in everything else. They choose their subjects in the old style, singing of any theme as it suits the occasion. We have known the song of a lawsuit last four days in presenting the case alone, with but brief intervals for food and sleep. Then followed the witnessing, cross-examining, defence, summing up, sentence, and all not only put into song, but danced to. They sing their jokes, repartees, joys, sorrows, hopes, and disappointments.

Their poems are not about the " ethereal blue " or the " flower-de-luce," but of the commonplace things of life: the farm where they get food, the water brook where they get fish, the chase where they get meat, or of the craft of the priest, of the mechanic, of the traveller, of the trader, of death. For the most part they are couplets which do not rhyme. Some of them are longer with less rhyme. Still, no one expects flawless measures anapæstic or dactylic, nor perfect heroics either blank or rhyming, in heathen prosody. There is a certain amount of rhythmical arrangement, but whether much or little they can sing them with telling effect.

ON THE DEATH OF A MOTHER

The last thing I noticed was the jingling of her anklets,
Alas, mother mine, scarcely can I think that thou hast gone.

A SIMPLE BALLAD

Oh Mr. Hawk fetch the water quickly,
That I may cook a fowl for you,
Lest in your town there be no fowl
To make a sacrifice for you.

When a woman wants to give her husband a little of her mind she sings it to the baby. Here is a nursery rhyme warranted to excite any Congo husband:

Bother the child, stop your crying,
Lest your eyes bulge
Like your father's
The frog on the upper stream.

After all, the true African song, its melody or its elegy, cannot be accurately represented in terms of European music or rhetoric. It is unique. Once heard it is never forgotten. It lives in the soul as long as memory lasts. It is at its best, where true light has invested it with a new

meaning. That is how it should be, for both express the divine. One of the greatest exponents of music, Haydn, has said that it was his contact with God which made his heart so full of joy that the notes flew off his soul " as from a spindle." The same association put music into the legs of David as well as into his tongue and into his lyre. A pentecost in music always follows a pentecost in the soul.

CHAPTER XXI

Musical Instruments

OF the many inventions humanity has given to the world musical instruments are among the earliest of which we have any record. Those of Congo carry us back to the primitive age, both in manufacture and manipulation. The Congolese can tell us all they know about music on a horn, a bell, a nonferreous whistle, a hollow berry, a few taut palm fibres strung on a box, or one or two metal strips or cane splinters tied on a small sound-box and twanged with their thumbs. No one, of course, expects a concerto or an oratorio from such things as these. They have wind instruments, stringed instruments, and instruments of percussion. Among the ancients there were the lute, the tambourine, and the pipe. Cymbals, tabrets, bells, harps, viols, flutes, pipes, and trumpets were among the earliest kinds. From these have come the orchestra, the brass band, and the pipe organ. What a mighty bridge it is from the simple pan-pipes of old to the pipe organ of to-day. The distance is just as great between the bagpipe of ancient Persia and Egypt, and the sarrusophone of the twentieth century, to say nothing of the gulf between the Greek cithern and a Strad. The dissimilitude between the Congo instruments and ours is still greater. They are less in number and inferior in workmanship, though some of them perhaps are not far behind in compass and tone. Like those of the Hebrews, they are the germs of better things. The difference between a Congo trumpet and our saxhorn, their metallo-

phone and our piano, their guitar, ocarina, bowstring, and the European equivalents is almost immeasurable. The tone of a tusk is soft, but it is not so mellow as a euphonium. The difference, too, in compass is immense. One horn means one note; the smallest saxhorn has at least two and a half octaves. Seven notes are as far as the natives have reached in wind instruments. The modern pianist is at home with a keyboard of eighty-five notes. The Congo musician seldom exceeds a keyboard of eleven notes. Yet the accomplishments of the Congolese in the art of music, and in the craft of making musical instruments, are indeed wonderful. They make no use of bellows in producing musical sounds. They use a double bellows for smithing, which resembles the action of the bellows of a harmonium, but they have never applied the idea for the production of music. The concept is as old as the Egyptians, but the Congo people even fail to understand the principle in a European organ. Their notion is that the "box" contains people who shout when the keys are pressed.

The basis of Congo music is the drum. A drum is a useful instrument so long as it is not treated solely as a noise-maker. It is of no great importance musically. At best, it can only serve to emphasize rhythm.

At Ba-kumba on the east bank of the Lualaba River we heard a drummer give a very pleasant performance. He played on an instrument which hung from his neck. It was about 3 feet 6 inches by 2 feet, and about 4 inches thick. In appearance it resembled the sound-box of a giant zither. He travelled all over the surface for his tones. It was quite a passable exhibition. It reminded us of the orchestral tympana, and probably it would not fall very short of the compass of the F tympanum—the way he played it. This was done without turnscrews, and, unlike the kettle-drum, which requires a different setting to obtain a different

pitch, he got his variations on one setting by pressing the head of the drum on one side in various places whilst playing on the other. The area of the drum facilitated this range of tone which he seemed to produce by enlarging or shortening the circuit of the sound in handling the sound-box which he muffled when and where required. The whole work was executed with drumsticks similar to those used for the timballes. It is the best drum performance we have witnessed anywhere, and his song was a most fitting accompaniment.

Ba-Congo drumming is very different. They drum mainly for dancing although all their drums are not used for dancing. The sounds are often like those of a luggage train puffing up an incline. Now and again there is a kind of *allegro veloce*, which develops into an *allegro furioso*, resembling that of a railway engine heavily laden coughing out steam fast enough to make the wheels revolve at a greater rate than they can pull the load along with them. At times the effect is that of beating carpets. More often the bigger drum reminds one of a gas-engine whilst the little one rattles out noises like shuttles on a moving loom.

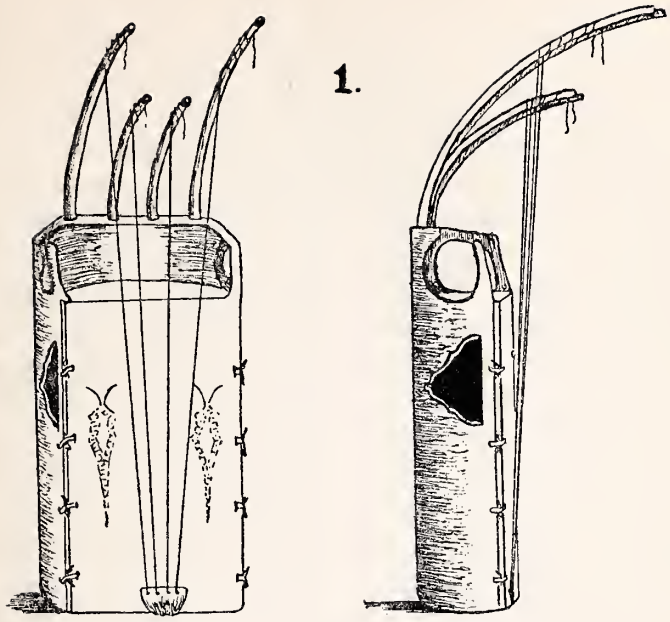
In drumming, two hands working at their utmost velocity are used to each drum. Even on the biggest drums the action is that of the side drummer only without sticks. They roll more often than they beat, only less technically than European bandsmen do it. The drums can be made to give a rattling effect for which, in our instruments, the snares are fixed on the underside of our side drums. They do it by attaching a piece of metal somewhere about the body of the instrument. The larger drums stand upright on the ground as they play them. Others are tilted forward. Some are held between the legs. Others are laid lengthwise and, when played, the drummer sits on the body of them. There is no definite pitch

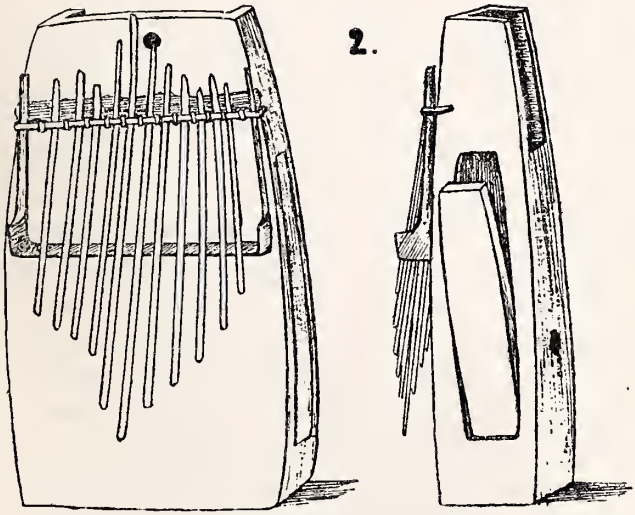
for any of them, although they are tuned to correspond more or less with each other when two or more are used together.

The names of the drums most frequently used are: *duku*, *mondo*, *ndungu*, *nkumbi*, *esikilu*, and the *dingwinti*. Of these, two are friction drums: the *nkumbi* and the *dingwinti*. All of them are segments of tree-trunks hollowed out, some with a tympanum over each end. Others are of the orchestral tambourine variety, though with much longer bodies and much smaller heads. The *ndungu* is only partly bored with a skin over one end. Some kind of toning is done to them all, but it appears to be to make the skins taut rather than to produce a definite pitch. Of the drums we have tested, the *duku* gives C and the *mbandu* F on the bass clef. The rest range between. All drums of the same name, however, have not given the same note, which leads us to believe that each drum is tuned to suit the maker, irrespective of any other drum of its kind.

The *duku* is the war drum. It is played for marching or during a fight. It is also used to set the pace between competitors, such as when one town challenges another to do a piece of work—to clear a road, for instance, or fell trees. Its beat is a military step.

A native likes music of some sort when he plays or works. He rows or paddles better to a song or a tattoo beaten out on the side of the canoe. In a caravan on the march it is usually the duty of one to strum an instrument, sing a song, or patter for the whole troop on the move. In all their games there is the soloist to whom the others reply in chorus. A sawyer can rip up a plank better to anything which gives musical metre. In fact, he saws an imitation drumming with drum measure movements. Two hammock men keep up a metric dialogue which helps them round tree-stumps, over stones, through swamps, or across rivers.





NATIVE MUSICAL INSTRUMENTS.

1. Nsambi. 2. Biti.

The Congolese makes an attempt to set everything to his music.

The *mondo* is specially a chief's drum used to call the people together when he has something to discuss, to announce, to decide, which requires the presence of his subjects. Its tone is very much like the English kettledrum. It gives two distinct notes : F and A bass clef. Its scope is limited to two or three messages, such as the announcement of " strangers at the palace," or an order to " collect the guns," or to call a meeting of the tribe. Another name for *mondo* is *kibudikidi*, meaning " something has burst," that is to say something very serious has happened.

The *nkumbi a nkongo* is the hunter's drum. Across the vellum is a notched stick. It is played by rubbing a cane to and fro over the corrugations. It is the only drum used in the prayer-to-the-dead ceremony.

The *esikilu* is the Congo kettledrum proper. In shape, size, number, tone, as well as in the manner of playing, it is a replica of the orchestral instruments of Europe. It is not so elaborate, but its likeness to the better drums is remarkable. It has no turnscrews or tripod. Very little tuning is done or is possible. They go in pairs as in our orchestras. They are dried before the fire until they give the required note. The larger drum is 22 inches by 18, and in girth about the size of the F kettledrum played at home. Its name is *ntuta*. The smaller one, *nkongo a mpanzu*, is of the same style as the B flat kettle and generally gives the note F treble clef. The larger is usually tuned to G bass. But we have found the pitch to vary in different instruments. They are band instruments. There is only one Congo band of instrumentalists—the trumpeters. The drums are stationed one on each side in orthodox style. They are held between the legs and drummed with the fingers and wrists. On the wrists of the drummers rattles are tied. They are large berries with dried seeds inside.

These are the drum "snares" and give exactly that effect. The playing consists of periodic "rolls" such as can be produced by the two hands rapping as fast as they can. At other times the players wander fairly well all over the field of drum music, taking a rest now and again to their own relief and, be it said, to the relief of others in the vicinity.

The only other drum worth mentioning is the *dingwinti*. This drum may be as large as a side drum in diameter, but it is usually twice as deep. The log from which it is made is hollowed out right through as evenly as possible. Over one end a well-tanned skin is stretched and pegged. The other is open. A hole is made in the centre of the tympanum through which is passed a stick or cane about the thickness of an ordinary school pointer. On the end of the stick is a knob which acts as a collar to prevent it being pulled through the drumhead when played. The drummer sits on the ground, holds the drum between his legs with its head on the further side of him, moistens his fingers with water, takes hold of the stick inside the drum and pulls towards him hand over hand, letting the stick pass at considerable pressure through his fingers. This sets up a rapid vibration of the vellum, which the player can easily modify from the bellowing of a bull to the blasts of a motor horn.

The *dingwinti* is the witch-priest's drum. Everything about it is weird. It is the devil's favourite instrument in Congoland out of a fairly wide selection of diabolic tympana. He seems to reside in this drum Diogenes-wise. It sets up a bigger sensation than any other drum in the country. It portends the most dreadful things even conceived by heathens—death, murder, poison, the stake, and all the horrible escapades of ghosts and hobgoblins. It is the only drum not used for fun. Its rhythm and its tone seem to spell out death. Every sound conjures up to

the mind of the native some sort of bogey. The tension during the playing of the *dingwinti* is enormous. There is inexpressible dread, for who can tell whose knell is being rubbed out on it. It holds the people spellbound. We have seen Congolese faint at the mere sound of it. It is a thousand times more doleful than the English minute-bell, for it not only means the burial of a corpse, it means the making of one, possibly a pyre, of them.

Of the remaining percussion instruments only two are worth noticing: the *Ngonge* and the *Madiumba*. The *Mingenge* is used as a sort of musical triangle, but its chief function is that stated in Chapter XVII. Its tone is sweet, rich, and clear. It gives a pure bell-like sound of equal value.

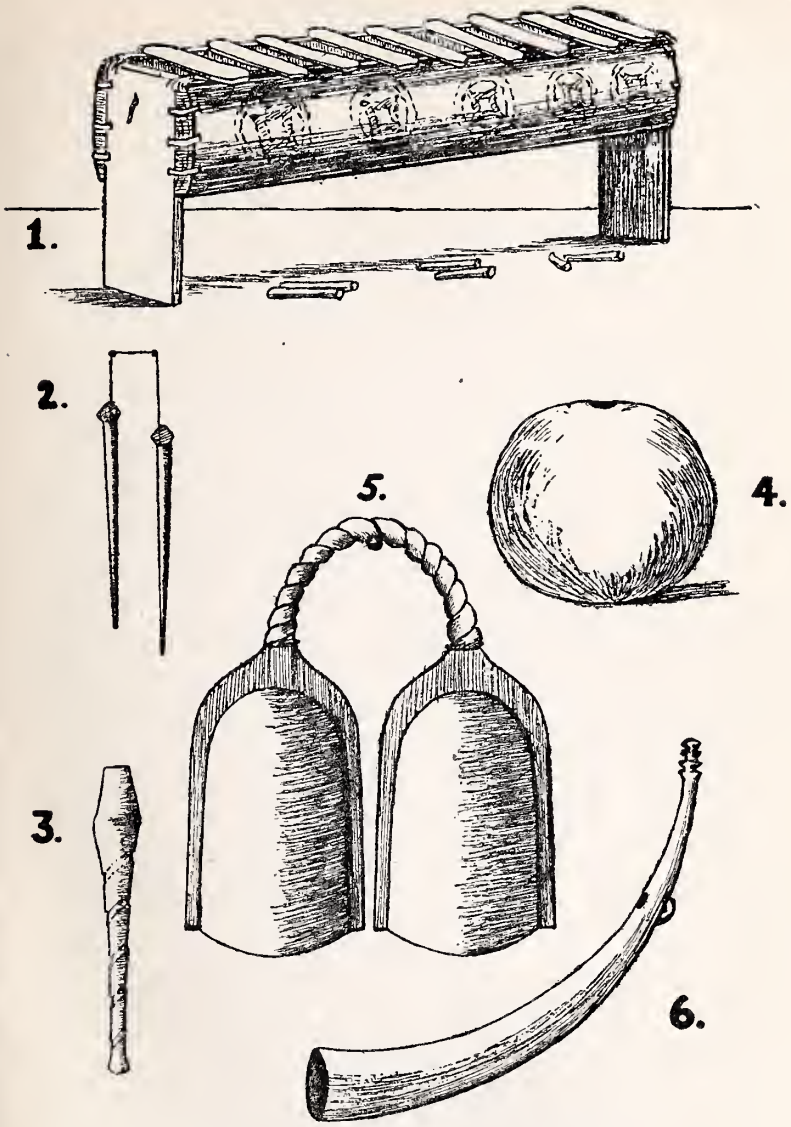
In campanology the Congo people have got no further than the *Edibu* or *Nkembi*, a wooden bell with a metal tongue. It has no better use than a dog can make of it when on the trot. It is tied to its body when going hunting to serve as a sign to the owner that the thing moving in the bush is not a beast but a dog. It is the dog's life-bell.

The *Ngonge* is a sort of *Glockenspiel* in inception. Instead of the steel bars, there are two iron gongs. It is shaped like a horseshoe. The bend is the handle with a gong at each end. The notes are clear, bright, and true. It is often played by women for dancing before major chiefs and other select company. It is a kind of town crier's bell also. Originally it could not be possessed by ordinary individuals. The standard price was one slave. It might make a useful addition, with the *Mingenge*, to the English drummer's equipment of clappers, whistles, pop-guns, castanets, and the rest.

The *Madiumba* is the sweetest native instrument we have heard. It is the celesta of negro music, only the slabs are wood, not metal. It is played with sticks, kettledrum fashion, not as the celesta proper, with its mechanism of

DIGGING OUT A CANOE.

When one considers the enormous labour and energy expended in hollowing out a huge tree trunk with no other tool than a native made adze and the agency of fire, one cannot with justice charge the native with laziness.



NATIVE MUSICAL INSTRUMENTS.

1. Madiumba.
2. Mingenge.
3. Mbasa.
4. Ebumi.
5. Ngonge.
6. Evula.

hammers and keys. The slabs are set horizontally on a frame like a dulcimer. Between them and the frame there is a layer of native material resembling twine to damp the strokes and to facilitate the vibrations for a pure tone. It is made of wood of special musical quality, sticks as well. The effect is that of a note played with a felt-covered hammer. Being soft, the wood is liable to absorb moisture which modifies the tone somewhat, but the modification does not interfere with its purity of sound as much as might be supposed. Each note has a separate resonator, which is a seed-pod of the *baobab* tree suited in girth and length to the note required. The instrument gives nine notes, though not in complete diatonic scale. There are several half-notes which make its compass less than an octave. Three players perform together on the *Madiumba*. Time, rhythm, and tune are all attractive. Its note is precisely that of the dulcitone, reminding one now and again of distant bells giving a carillon. A forte is impossible, which is another virtue of the *Madiumba*.

Of the wind instruments, we need only give attention to the trumpets, the pipe, and the ocarina. There are many other very crude and primitive articles into which the natives blow in search of sounds and melodies. Almost anything which can be made to emit a sound with or without variations, is made free use of.

Of trumpets, there are several ivory horns: B flat, D flat, and F on the bass clef; G sharp, D flat, E flat, and E on the treble clef. These, with two drums and two rattles, make the full Congo band. The names of the instruments are three *evula*, *ngandu*, *ngundu*, *luenze*, and *koka titi*. A chord of music is *eleko*. The musical combinations such a compass is capable of are neither many nor sublime. The "star" piece of the Lungezi band opened with the third *evula* trumpeting F. The *ngandu* replied with a long note. This was done three times. On the second repeat the

ngundu blew a prolonged E flat. With the fourth repeat the rest joined in a kind of campanological style, in which the various changes were blown into the trumpets after the manner of ringing them on a set of bells, though more like that which is heard in a cattle market than from a belfry. Rhythm is spoilt by noise. Each player seems bent on making his horn heard at the expense of music and the other bandsmen. A band appears to play for the sake of competition, not harmony. Still, the band is the most popular thing in the way of music, to the tastes of the Congolese.

The pipe represents the humble origin of the pan-pipes and the more elaborate pipes of the organ. Its name is *mbasa* or *matunga*. In appearance it is like a flageolet whistle without the mouthpiece or finger-holes. The mouthpiece is concave, the body is conical. The parabola to the first and larger boss is about two inches. The longer one is seven and three-quarter inches. The bore starts at the mouth hole at seven-eighths of an inch, tapering to the end to quarter of an inch. It is a very simple yet remarkable instrument. Not being turned in a lathe it is of imperfect workmanship, yet its tone is rich and mellow like that of the flute. Its native use is confined to purposes of the chase, but it is certainly capable of better things.

The Congo ocarina has no resemblance to an "oca." It is more like a cricket ball than an egg. It is a hollow berry called *ebumi*, with three holes in it, a large one at the top—the mouthpiece—a smaller one at the bottom for the thumb, and a still smaller one near the mouth-hole for the forefinger. Its tone, if anything, is richer than the terra-cotta or the metal article of South Europe. Its mechanism is quite adamic, comprising a chromatic scale of nineteen distinct, clear, organ quality notes from middle C to F on the fifth line; only a semitone less than the

Italian instrument with all its modern tone-producing facilities. The native does not know the true musical value of this simple device, but we have proved it capable of the above extension. By careful fingering it commands the majority of tunes usually associated with such an instrument. There is no fixed scale. Berries of different size give different notes. The Congo ocarina might be made to contribute good music.

Strictly speaking, the *Nsambi* is the only stringed instrument the Congolese have. The African fiddlephone is Swazi, not Ba-Congo. The *nsambi* is the Congo fiddle. The material of which it is made is a soft, white, light, sonorous wood of a rich musical quality which is not very inferior to that of the maple, pear, sycamore, and other hard wood out of which violins proper are made. Its softness, however, renders it susceptible to the influences of the atmosphere. But it stands the other tests for a properly seasoned violin quality wood. It is non-resinous, burns slowly but clearly and without crackling or spitting, and it leaves a uniform ash when dry. All Congo wood instruments are made of the same material. The *nsambi* has little affinity, however, to the violin. Its make would justify its being called banjo, mandoline, or a guitar, but it is not much like any of those instruments, though it has some features common to them all. It approaches the violin in its strings, of which there are four, giving the notes from left to right: A flat, F, E flat, and C. The strings are extracted from the raphia vinifer bamboo: thick, thin, and medium gauge. Some of them are even thinner than the E string of the violin. Others are of the size and quality of the bass of the 'cello. They lie in sheaths in the bamboo, and are stripped out quite easily. The quality of tone the strings give when touched with a European bow of the best white horsehair is rich and pure. No one but an expert musician of stringed instruments

could tell the difference between the tone of a true violin string and that of these fibres strung on a native sound-box if one were asked to judge without seeing them or knowing of them, providing both were handled by expert players, or both by equally matched amateurs. The tail-piece is a patch of animal skin through which the strings are passed and tied on the under-side. The pegs are set into the back of the body, then bent forward over the front of the instrument, securing the strings in a twist on the ends. Tuning is done by tightening or slackening the coil. After this it ceases to be a violin. There is no bridge, no sound-post, no scroll, no peg-box. It is neither held nor played like a violin. It is held as a mandoline is held. It is played with a plectrum of plaited strands of the same material as the strings. No attempt is made to get more than one note from each string.

In the same class of instruments we place the *Biti*, because it is neither blown nor beaten, but twanged like the *Nsambi*. The body of the *Biti* is hollow. For one and a half inches from the top the sound-box is reduced to the thickness of less than a quarter of an inch to facilitate the lacing and fastening of the notes to the body of the instrument. The musical bars rest on a metal bridge, which spans the width of the sound-box, each end being turned back from the centre of the body to the top, where it rests on a second bridge of thick vellum. The notes are passed under another metal bar, which is secured to the sound-box very strongly with a fibre knotted at the back.

The *biti* is the sweetest instrument to the native taste. When played by an expert it is sweet to a cultivated taste. It is the most popular among them. Its sound is that of a violin string played with the finger. A clever player can produce the most charming effects with it. It has eleven notes—the total compass of Congo music and musical instruments. It is true to concert pitch. Only lack of space

prevents us giving a musical introduction and medley for the *biti* and the *nsambi*.

Such are the mechanisms, rough, crude, yet wonderful, out of which the Congo people get what musical snatches they can out of the enormous musical treasures of the world. With them they come upon many of the gems of melody found in the universe of music. Congolese have established their love for music, the rest will follow in due course.

CHAPTER XXII

Wisdom & Wit of Native Folklore

IN exploring the field of native lore we follow the method of others who have penetrated the secrets of primitive religions and ethical movements in other lands. The traditions, proverbs, folklore, and fairy tales of the Congolese afford us one of the best studies of the native mind that we can possibly find. If the story of the rajah and the swan is a fair sample of Indian poetry we can come confidently to the traditions of the Ba-Congo. They may not be as poetic, but there is pathos, sentiment, love, duty, honour, reverence, candour, and many other virtues which constitute a fruitful field for research. Whether they are relics of lost things or not, they are reliable evidence of potentialities worthy of a greater and a nobler faith.

Sir George Birdwood says, " To obtain an understanding of the ways of thinking and feeling of the modern Hindu, one must make oneself familiar with old Indian poetry." Mosfill, in his treatment of the Slavonic religion applied himself to the " rich fund of folklore and folksong " of the Russians. Mr. Ralston worked in the same province. We go to the same source to understand the religion, manners, and ethics of the life of any people. To seek to understand a people by beginning a study of them in any other region is to miss the groundwork of the systems we seek to understand.

To anyone interested in the creed of a primitive race comes a further interest to know what are its ethical bear-

ings, its influences upon the life of the people as a race. How does it look upon right and wrong? What does it make of benevolence, justice, unselfishness, truth, reciprocity, marriage, laws of children, of parents, of citizens, of civil society, of happiness, and of general obligation? We do not ask whether these are factors in African life. They are. Ethnology and other literature have established the fact for practically the whole world. The point is, how far they are developed in the different societies of the community. We are able to speak for the Ba-Congo.

Having, then, seen the Congo mind through Congo fetishism we now turn especially to philology, folklore, proverbs, legends, etc., to get another view of the mentality and psychology of the people. Our authority is an exceedingly large collection of lore, including fifteen hundred proverbs hitherto unrecorded, except a very few in more common use. A close study of the vernacular yields to us a vast wealth of important things in the life and history of the Bantu people.

Proverbs are not mere platitudes. They play an important part in the life of the nation. Indeed, as the Congo proverb says, " They are the AFFAIRS of the nation." To tell a man that a " dog with four legs can't walk in two roads at the same time " will nearly always save him from duplicity. A selfish man is pertinently reminded that he who has caught a palm rat in each hand and sheds his loin cloth in the effort, remains in a silly predicament until he wisely lets one go. They are sayings which carry authority. Negroes will bow to the force of a proverb when they would be inflexible to every other force. We have seen the edicts of a king nullified by an apt use of them. Litigation is often a battle of proverbs. Such an important thing as a verdict often depends upon a bit of wit or a truth with a spice of pith in it. Folklore is a

language within a language, known only to those students who mine into it doggedly, persistently, and sincerely. It is the language natives use when they do not intend the superficial white man to understand what is being said to their fellows. We have known them to go on for three consecutive days bombarding us with proverbs, sayings, and traditional philosophy in an ordinary discussion as to whether we should be permitted to settle among them.

Whilst there have been some who, in an age of false refinement, have despised proverbs, some of the greatest scholars, poets, and philosophers have given much time and attention to the study and interpretation of them. Aristotle made a collection of them. The works of Shakespeare are seasoned with them. He chose some as titles to his plays, e.g. *All's Well that Ends Well.* Solomon has given us a book of them. The Master Himself quoted the proverbs of the people. Paul cited heathen folklore. They knew the place and value of such philosophy both in the society and in the soul of the people. It is where we step into the privacy of the Congo mind. There may be much that is fanciful, profane, or even immoral in the folklore of nations, since selfishness, deceit, and other imperfections exist, but there is also much of the other sort which we intend to focus for the Congolese, in classifying a few matters of religious, social, and ethical purport.

To begin with, we find the Ba-Congo very optimistic. No one is so bad as to be an utter moral vacuum. "There is something even in the worst for which one will always be kindly remembered," is the native way of putting it. Things are not always as bad as they seem even in heathendom. "Things mourned for will become things rejoiced over." "Though the night tarry the dawn will break." "In a field of bad beans there is bound to be some worth gleaning."

Such a trinity of hope at the back of the black man's mind is a promising starting-point for him in his quest for life. We have known estimates of human life far more pessimistic in environments much brighter than those of the African.

Folklore teaches the negro to cultivate friendship. Friendship is a good policy. "If you make the partridge your enemy and the cock your enemy, who will let you know when the dawn breaks?" If you make everybody your enemy what will you do when you want a friend? Sound sense that! "If you destroy both the sun and the moon you leave yourself in utter darkness." Friendships, when made, are worth cherishing. "If you love a hunter love his dog." To appreciate what is dear to a friend is to cement the friendship. "If you love a man do not take him along a dewy road which will give him cause to quarrel." Friendship is based on mutual understanding. "A familiar call is only made between those who understand each other." Nothing can efface the happy memory of true friendship once enjoyed. "You may drink out of a human skull, but you can never obliterate from your mind that it once had eyes in it." It was the seat of intelligence before it was a drinking cup, a fact that will be remembered every time it is raised to the lips. Even a wrecked friendship retains some quenchless gleam of its lost estate. Friendship is gracious. "It never uses a peppercorn as an eye-drop." It does nothing calculated to sacrifice itself. It is generous. "Though a man has actually less wisdom than his friend the friend treats him as though he had more." Friendship supplies a want in human nature which is world wide, and is as choice in the life of a black man as it is in the life of any man.

On the law of parents the negro is not without ideals. A parent should love his offspring in spite of anything.

" Though a leopard give birth to a palm rat she does not eat it." The love of a parent should be at least as true as the love of a big cat for its cub. Early training is good for a child. " Teach a child before it goes to the dance not after it has come back." It is no use giving a lesson when it is too late. " It is too late in the day to pull the bedclothes over oneself when the day has dawned." Children, like tender shoots, are more easily cultivated than a mature being who is as inflexible as a matured oak.

The attitude of children to parents is aptly defined. A child should obey its parents. " O space (child) between two beds (parents), obey the beds, you also will one day be a bed." That is to say, as you hope to be obeyed so you ought to obey. " A leopard's cub is never afraid of its mother's spots." He who forgets what his mother did for him when a child is not worth calling a son. " A fawn never forgets his own feeding ground." It is not becoming to get " too big " for the family. " A chicken which has forgotten to scratch has forgotten the example of its parents." What is good for father is good for son. " The home is the place of affection," is a proverb of first-class quality.

Respecting old people the Congolese are charming. " Water drawn by old men quenches thirst." Old men are to be relied upon. " A bridge-pole (over a river) held by an old man (whilst you cross over) never shakes or turns over." Old men have the knack and knowledge of doing things. " Give to an old man before he asks of you," puts old people in the best chamber of the negro heart.

Then there is a liberal crop of social maxims, such as Christian nations need not be ashamed of. " Everyone to his own business," or as the Congo song says, " Everybody to his own calling and nobody to any other." " Manza's

business is to farm peanuts, Lema's business is to attend to matters of law." It is the woman's work to cook the goat, but not to skin it. Don't interfere in other people's affairs. "He who pokes into the business of others is never without dirty feet." The "hawk which pecks in a trap set for the eagle has itself to blame if it loses its head." He who hesitates is often lost. "If a frog stays too long in one place the snake gets him." A man must sleep like an antelope, "with his wits (*nkono*) about him," or, as our phrase goes, "with one eye open." Kindness is never lost. "Kindness wins men not pride." "A good deed never dies." "If you meet a man with a partridge in his bag for sale, unkindness and incivility will not induce him to show it, but amiability will bring it out of the bag." If he finds you friendly he will do you a good service and let you have the bird. "Kindness is like trees in a farm, they lean towards each other." Do not take revenge in a hurry. "It is best to let an offence repeat itself at least three times; the first offence may be an accident, the second a mistake, but the third is likely to be intentional." Do not attempt the impossible. It is useless to try to "tie up a broken egg." "A doctor bald to the nape of his neck is not likely to cure anybody of baldness." Let every man have his due. You must "let the man who is cracking his kernels finish his nuts before you take his place or his nutcrackers—stones." It is not wise or polite to "criticize the tune of another drummer if you can't play a better," or "condemn a neighbour's thatch if you have no better to offer." Be diligent. "A little work often helps one out of difficulty." "Give to the earth and the earth will give to you." Impetuosity is an unprofitable thing. "It is the gentle finger which gets the worm" (an edible grub which burrows in the palm tree to feed). Impatience squashes it or pulls it in two. Never surrender to despair. "If you destroy

one road make another." "When one bottle breaks replace it with another."

The rules of moral conduct are none the less valuable and interesting. There is plain recognition of moral law. "A bad thing must have a bad effect." "A bullet fired in malice, if it does not draw blood where it starts will draw blood where it strikes." This saying includes what moral philosophy takes for granted: i.e. the twofold evil of a wrong, objective and subjective. Blood is sure to result objectively, and there is a suspicion that it will result subjectively. Mavakala who shoots is wrong (malice), the injury to the one he shoots is another wrong. Blood is drawn at both ends. Is it not true that the one who fires at another often fires the same shot into his own breast?

Not only is a moral quality recognized in an action, but also a moral quality in the intention. Mavakala meant harm. That is an injury to himself. It is not considered right to cover an evil purpose even with an innocent action. "The mule does not eat grass because he prefers it, but only to mislead you when you are looking. His purpose is to get at your farm of manioc to which he is slyly making a road under the pretence of grazing properly." No Congo native looks upon that as right. They say frankly that it is wrong for one to give one's friend, who is ready to start on a journey, the impression that one intends to accompany him, when one's only motive is to share the rations he has prepared for the road. It is a double wrong. You rob him and you deceive him.

Guilt is the sequence of wrong, even to a Congo mind. Not only so, but the consciousness of it is bound to follow. "When the dog has eaten the eggs his looks show it." In man, that signifies a guilty conscience. In brutes it is an instinct which answers to it. "If he who sells a monkey

sees shame he who buys it will see shame also." They know what makes a man hide his hands behind his back. He has been eating what he has stolen and wants no one to see the oil still dripping from his fingers. A guilty conscience sometimes makes a man start like an antelope when it hears a gunshot. "What makes you jump, nobody has fired a gun?" "You are startled, have you eaten anything belonging to the lightning?" That is the black man's conscience.

The axioms on Congo morality are no less worthy than their social apothegms. Take the most famous of them:

"O man, what you do not like do not to your fellow."

"Shake off trouble (evil) as you would shake off a spark."

"Patience catches a dozen thieves."

"Mutual love is often better than natural brotherhood."

"One who has wisdom must have a little of his own."

"I'd rather be poor than a fool."

"One must never pay back an offender in his own coin." (Two must not be guilty of the same wrong.)

"Other people's property ought not to make you envious."

"Don't take the road of a fool lest therein you become a fool."

"Be a man, and, as a toad on a rubbish heap which simply blinks at you when you throw dust on it, suffer silently."

"Pride only goes the length one can spit."

"The hasty man catches the snake in the middle" (so gets bitten).

"After the lie is told you wake up to the consequences of it."

"A bald-headed man cannot grow hair by getting excited about it."

"If you see a jackal in your neighbour's garden drive it out, one may get into yours one day and you would like the same done for you."

"What is under the water is hidden, but it will one day come to the top." "Though a hundred and fifty days go by and nothing happens, the day of reckoning will come."

"Anger never teaches anyone."

"You may know the pot in which you cook, but you do not know the pot in which you will be cooked."

"A rascal (*milliped*) in the forest farm may be safe enough at the tree felling, but he is sure to be caught at the burning."

"Hope kills nobody."

"To take revenge is often to sacrifice oneself."

"Walk with a monkey and you will learn how to jump, walk with one in a fix and you will get in a fix."

They are but a few examples of the ethical and moral contents of Congo folklore. That they point in the right direction needs no microscope to determine. They are the unwritten laws of the people who believe them, follow them, and propagate them without demur.

The negro can also put his philosophy into crisp, pithy, epigrammatic, self-evident formulæ. They are like powerful and useful drugs in tiny, serviceable capsules.

"Time well spent is never wasted."

"All who travel in the rain get wet."

"A beast too strong will break the net."

"Those united against a common enemy should not fall out among themselves."

"Those who inherit fortunes are often more troublesome than those who make them."

"It is easier to deceive one eye than to deceive a hundred."

"Every town looks well built from a distance."

"Nobody needs a light to see how to make a speech."

"One who can't walk is never set to make the pace."

"You cannot cut an elephant up with a palm frond, nor carry it in a calabash."

"Too much luck drives one mad."

"When the ant which challenges the elephant is trod on, what part of the ant will escape?"

"If you have a good drum play it where it can be appreciated."

"The dog which thinks it is eating when it is only smacking its lips, deceives itself."

"Don't break your leg in running after a dog that is bound to come home."

"Don't 'pull the leg' of one who is befriending you."

"Where the anvil clanks the iron wears."

"See a thing before you buy it."

"Before you drink see where the water is coming from."

"If the fist is not drawn well back it has no force in it."

"You can't knock a man's teeth out by hitting him in the stomach."

"Don't be like a fowl's tail, straight at the beginning and crooked at the end."

"After a coney has discovered the light it does not prefer the darkness."

"He who fishes in the night catches nothing but leaves."

"Very small chickens can't lay very big eggs."

"It is easier to squeeze pus out of somebody else's boil than out of one's own."

"Don't set pigs to weed a farm of manioc nor cats to fry eels."

"He who grows pumpkins on the edge of a hill must not be surprised if they roll down."

"Oil helps the nail in."

"The animal which can't climb a tree should not trust his money to a monkey."

"The man to whom you sell your wine is the man to go to for the bottle."

"One with a bald head ought not to laugh at one with just a tonsure."

"A little fish sometimes catches a big one."

"The best way to stop a fast antelope is not to run after it, but to head it off."

"Fruit high up on the tree can be reached with a crook."

"A rat is usually trapped by the litter it leaves behind it."

"Don't despise a gift because it is small."

"Things well proved are worth sticking to."

"No one spies on another for good."

"You can never tell what bites in a house you have never slept in."

"A pig never pushes its snout into a house without upsetting things."

"You cannot distinguish between rats in the dark."

"No matter how the ears grow they never exceed the head they grow on."

"Don't jest with serious things lest they come to pass."

"It takes a lot of salt to make an elephant tasty."

"A man may know the origin of a matter, but he can never tell where it will end."

"A trap too strong will root up its own stakes."

"You can't whistle with another man's mouth."

"Work should be praised when finished not when begun."

"It is better to shout after the war than before it."

"If you don't want the gun to go off don't cock the trigger."

"It is no good trying to cut a hard tree with a soft axe."

"He who builds a house ought to know where to put the door."

"To disentangle your legs from a string is no help if you then get it round your neck."

"Don't chase a madman as though you were mad lest you be judged mad."

"Don't trick others lest in tricking them you teach them the way to trick you."

"Good metal welds, bad metal burns."

"No man can lick the hair on his own back."

"Everybody likes his own dog to be on top."

"Things that crow come from eggs."

"Foolishness often precedes wisdom."

"If you cannot respect a man's position respect his age."

"Help those who cannot help themselves."

"He who thinks of you in sickness will think of you in death."

"A man is never counted two because he is fat, or only half a man because he is lean."

"Where the drum is burst is the place to mend it."

"When you cannot get at what you want get at what you can."

"If a dog starts hunting when it is young hunting will become its mania."

"Don't despise a useful thing because it is not beautiful. If your nose is not handsome never mind as long as you can breath through it."

"Habit is a full-grown mountain, hard to get over or to pull down."

They are flashes of reason, glints of conscience, lights of a soul benighted but not lost. They are gleams from the innermost chamber of the Congo mind, stars in the negro's firmament, made more distinct by the mighty darkness in which they are set, but with just sufficient visibility to show that the West Central African is not yet in utter, outer darkness.

CHAPTER XXIII

Comparative Religion

IN studying the religion of Congo we are met on the threshold with a great difficulty. There are no old manuscripts into which we can bore, no native literature to guide us. We are entirely without the advantage of written evidence. It is a big handicap. There is absolutely nothing, not even a line of doggerel. It is not that there is no material to make a literature. There is plenty. A master is required to collect and classify it. It would make an interesting addition to a few of the sciences in an elementary sort of way. It would be a prologue of course, and not an appendix. A few foreign works have given us some fragments of native material, but there is still a further vein in native lore and language containing unknown wealth. Again philology reveals to us something of the growth, the development, the religious activity, the hopes, and ideals of the Congo soul. We naturally do not expect to find the ethics of Confucius where we cannot find even a schoolboy's "Three Character Classic," or the philosophy of Chuang-tzu where there is no college even of "The Forest of Pencils." We shall, however, find material equal to much that is common in those systems, and, indeed, not a little that is superior to many things contained in them.

Even a superficial acquaintance with the Congolese will discover surface indications of deeper things at a deeper depth. That the African is capable of the purest devotion is known to all students of African life. Demba paid

for his loyalty to Mungo Park, in slavery from which his distressed master could not save him. Malalwe fought off the lion which would have ended the career of Dr. Livingstone. The names of Chuma, Susi, Moolu, and many others are immortalized in the world's records for fidelity of the first magnitude. The fact that these seeds of nobleness are found in the hearts of savages is an indisputable evidence that Providence has destined them to share the best light, love, and liberty vouchsafed to any part of mankind. These manifestations are but symptoms of fundamental things underneath in which they have been conceived and from which they are brought forth.

Ruskin has said, that " the life of religion depends upon the force of faith and not upon the terms of it." That is true of every religion whether true or false. The tenets of a religion may be spurious, but as long as people believe in them they will survive. The thing to remember is, that black men believe in their creed with a sincerity and simplicity as Arabs trust the Koran, or Asiatics the Vedas, or Christians the Bible.

Religion is a term used to denote worse systems than those in vogue among the Congolese ; Taoism, for instance. F. W. Balfour says that it is " a base and abject superstition, a religion in the worst and lowest sense, a foolish idolatry supported by an ignorant and venal priesthood commanding the respect of no single class in the community, a system of unreasoning credulity on the one hand and of hocus-pocus and imposture on the other." Congoism is not as bad as that, bad as it is. It cannot boast the " pure and lofty philosophy " of that system in 80 B.C., but it improves some of the tenets even of that ancient creed.

Nothing, as far as we know, has been found in ancient or modern Africa connected with religion to equal the discoveries in ancient America, burial murders not excepted, where anything between 20,000 and 50,000 human beings

were sacrificed annually to the gods. Human flesh was, and is, in some places in Africa slaughtered on a small scale for human consumption—a sorry enough custom forsooth, but scarcely as low as the religious delusion which sought to feed the gods with it on such a monstrous scale. The Mexicans sacrificed 70,000 prisoners of war at the dedication of one temple just four years before Dom Diego Cam discovered the mouth of the Congo. Congo witchcraft murder is a mild matter in comparison. In the Bimbia peninsula, north of the Cameroons delta, says Sir H. Johnston, 8000 murders were committed through witchcraft and other means, but they were spread over forty years. That is a very different thing from the annual 20,000, the lowest at which the Mexican total is put. The Congo religious motive too, if we may so put it, is better, because witch murder is an effort to suppress an evil, whilst that of the Mexicans appears to have been to perpetuate an evil, or even to deify it.

Congo is not as wealthy in gods as most religions, some of which claim them by the million. Those of Hinduism have been put at 3,000,000. Shintoism boasts 8,000,000 genii. It is doubtful whether the Congolese could count that number though they have the words for it. Certainly they could not count it in the abstract. It would have to be in nuts or plantains or something of the sort. Nevertheless it is true that wherever the negro can fit in a genius with a need he does so. Number, however, is unimportant. The principle is the same whether there be few or many.

Selfishness and temporal well-being are the motive of Congo religion. But the same is true more or less of all religions animistic, symbolic, barbaric. Whatever the religion be where mystic polydæmonism predominates the main object of its devotees is to place themselves in amicable relation with the spirits, in order to secure the best for themselves. Dr. Reville, speaking of the religion of the

Peruvians, considers that there is nothing essentially moral in it because its motive was solely for their temporal well-being. That even its highest form, where it not only defended but inculcated an elevated standard of ethics, was of no very high moral value because its object was self-seeking. That is a criterion which at once rules out the creed of the African, as, indeed, the majority of the religious systems of the world. Want of some kind is an inalienable element of religion. Its nature, in a large measure, depends upon culture, so that where culture is low it is undoubtedly more selfish, where culture is high it is more spiritual. But whatever degree of selfishness there be, the religion in which want exists usually provides some means of satisfying it, or recognizing some power that can satisfy it, which, after all, is the essential thing in any religion. It is an object less moral than many, but it is, at any rate, an effort to secure what good they can, as well as an endeavour to perpetuate it. It is better than no effort at all.

Dr. Tiele says, of the religion of ancient Egypt, that "the leading thought contained in all its myths and symbols is comprised in the word 'life.'" The Egyptians certainly sought to obtain it by a decidedly animistic form of worship, polydæmonism included. The instinct of self-preservation is characteristic of all animistic religions and of some religions that are not animistic. Does not the term "life" sum up the aspirations of all religions? It is the goal at which all mortals aim. The Christian seeks it in the noblest form of worship known. His motive is not reward. Eternal life is a sequence not a cause. Others seek the same goal in other ways. The object is not wrong though the means used to realize it are often wrong. But wrong as they are, in Africa they represent the efforts of beings ignorant of the fact that they are on the wrong track in their quest for "life." The Congo native regards

his fetish as *moyo ame*, my life. That he does so is no more strange than that the Hittites should regard the equilateral triangle as the "source of life."

Assyrian mythology comes very near in many respects to Congoism. They had to deal with spirits which in their anger upset the elements, attacked human mortals, and necessitated untiring devotion to magic and sorcery in order to retain any hope of life at all. Congoism is a repetition of this Assyrian effort by the aid of fetishes.

We have read of natives of other parts of the world whipping their idols, threatening to kill them when they did not satisfy their desires. In China during the great famine of 1878 the poor sufferers bundled their gods out of the temples and set them to "bake and blister in the burning sun that they might realize from experience the desperate condition of affairs, and in self-defence send the needed rain." Congolese spit pepper and kola nut into the face of their fetish image when they feel it has not gratified their wishes according to their tastes. When a Congo man is disgusted with the favours or generosity of his fetish he will throw it on to the rubbish heap outside his house and leave it there until he thinks it is ashamed of itself.

But the Congo native has an instinct which prompts him to something more than a fanaticism of self-preservation. He offers to his patron spirits the flesh of fowl, of venison, and of other game for meat. For drink he gives the best beverage known to a Congo tapster. The Congo woman shuts herself up for months in close association with her fetishes to pacify any anger on their part or to gratefully acknowledge some benefit, such as freedom from disease, gifts of skill, divination, and so forth, even to the gift of a child she dearly loves. This may seem fanciful to us, but who shall say that it does not satisfy feelings in his or her soul which are allied with those

CENTRAL AFRICAN SOVEREIGN.

Head Chiefs appointed by Foreign Governments are given a Medal as a badge of office. They collect the taxes from minor chiefs for which they receive a commission, and adjudicate in minor cases of law.

EXPECTATION.

A Congo lady is often in the marriage market. She has a brass collar round her neck, and other brass ornaments on her arms and legs. Dusky brides adore pretty things in the form of brass, beads and buttons.

sentiments they will discover in the dawn of a new conscience.

The Congo system may be a grotesque, sordid system, but it is not hopeless. Fetishism is an improvement on Hindu idolatry because it is not idolatrous. It may be infantile, but it is not an *adoration* of infantile things. A Congo witch can pass into a lion, a boar, or a crocodile as easily and as completely as the Indian Vishnu can do it, but the Congolese seek to kill her, not to honour her with the gory offering of a Juggernath.

If and when the "jet" of Bantu language, as it has been called, left the Nile region for the Congo, is it not possible that a "jet" of Egyptian cultus travelled with it? The two religions coincide in many important respects. We do not find animal worship in West Congo, but we do know that animals in Egypt, before they were gods, were simply fetishes and continued to be such for the great majority of the people. The crocodile holds a special place in both creeds. The Egyptians paid it homage. The Congo people hold it in special awe. They do not worship it. It is regarded as being in some way the particular associate of the worst kind of spirit known to the Congo mind. Again, the Egyptians worshipped the dead. The Congo folk go a long way in the same direction, if they do not actually worship them, which is a moot point. The Egyptians embalmed the bodies to preserve them. The Congolese keep them as long as they can without embalming them. The care for the dead in Egypt was as animistic as that in Congo. In both cults there is attention given to those dead, the spirits of which they fear would haunt and hurt them if they failed to do so. The forming and creating god was known to the Egyptians as Ptah of Memphis. The negro's God of creation is identical with Him of Hebrew fame. What Chnum was to the Northerners Nkita are to the Ba-Congo, except that they are scarcely

ever found with the same amiable disposition. They make but they deform in the making.

In dealing with the Congo set of fetishes known as *nkamba*, we saw that the eagle is, in some mystical way, a favourite with the spirits, for which reason they give no little attention to it. We find the Hittite doing much the same thing, for the eagle was to them the "bird of the sun." In and about Carchemish they worshipped it in connection with the "king of heaven"—the sun. The hawk, too, was a symbol of the rising sun—Horus. Congo superstition, furthermore, was anticipated by the Assyrians. In war they trusted Shamas. Congo warriors rely on Ebunze and Mpungu. Vul, who destroyed crops and trees, caused floods and damage by lightning, threw the thunderbolt, answers exactly to the Congo Nzazi, which does precisely the same thing. Vul, in the capacity as rain-giver, is the Congo Lukandu. When Nergal helped them in the chase the Congo Nambwa was prefigured. Both races had their images. It is, therefore, as correct to speak of the religion of the Congolese as it is to speak of the religion of the Egyptians or of the Assyrians.

Teutonic history, too, shows the way we have trod. It is a similar way the African is travelling to-day. Witchcraft, medicine, hypnotism, magic, sorcery, in fact nearly every superstition, find their counterparts in the ancient religious customs of the Angles, Saxons, Jutes, Scandinavians, and others of the same family, whilst those of the Turanians, Goidels, Brythons, and the Ivernian Druids, serve to show that the Congolese, at the worst, are only in the religious maze and madness which at one time or another has gripped the bulk of mankind.

Is it, therefore, correct to say that there is no religion among the Ba-Congo? If there is no religion in Congoland, seeing that religion is natural to man, they must have lost it. But have they lost it? They recognize God, good, sin,

and the devil. They realize that they must struggle against evil and contend with evil beings. They believe in and prepare for a future beyond the grave. They have conceived a system of rewards and punishments after death. The life beyond is divided into two distinct spheres : one for the " ghosts," the other for the " innocents." They have their questions of annihilation, of transmigration of souls into pigs and other things. They have notions of immortality, spiritual communion, moral discipline, honour, justice, conscience, obligation, etc. These things may be mystical, but they are not mythical. They are, in a large degree, undoubtedly mistaken, but they are more than imagery. They contain no small amount of truth.

The religion of Congo is not all gloom and vice. There are streaks of light often made more distinct by floating particles of false things which come into them like dust into a sunbeam. But the false things which break up the light, and which prevent those shafts which escape the darkness from throwing an efficient illumination into the mind of the negro, can be removed, and the undesirable matter which impairs the luminosity of the faint gleams which shine in the gloom can be effectively laid.

CHAPTER XXIV

Theory of Good Spirits

THERE is nothing in Congo thought corresponding exactly with English ideas of God, faith, prayer, and the rest of the terms which express the themes of Christianity. That goes without saying, since the people are as far from that religion theologically as they are from the poles geographically. When such words are used in connection with the systems of Central Africa they cease to have their classic meaning. Having not even arrived at a Mount Sinai, the Congolese are unable to think in the language of the Sermon on the Mount. We take so much for granted in our use of such diction concerning the religion of Congo. Yet no other words can truly give us the correct import of that religion.

There are two distinct orders of supernatural beings that are *good* recognized by the Ba-Congo : God, the supreme Good, and Fairies—their nearest approach to an angelic order.

The etymology of the word *Nzambi*, i.e. God, is lost. Is it a compound word made up of *nza*, i.e. world, and *-mbi*, extremely wonderful—*nzambi*—spoken after the manner Robinson Crusoe's friends used to say "Oh" up in the mountain, to Benamuckee ? *Mbi* expresses the profound, the wonderful, the perfect. Is it *Nza-mbi*, the marvel of marvels—the world, a sort of pantheistic admiration for the almightiness of the universe ? Perhaps it is fanciful, but it is thought to be likely by natives best able to judge. Were it true it certainly does not represent

all that the Congolese think about God. Their ideas of God are vague. They are vague because they do not go far. But as far as they go they are not altogether wrong, and in some ways not vague. Indeed, some of their ideas of God are of a surprisingly good quality.

Nzambi is spoken of as self-created. The phrase is, *Nzambi adivanga.* He is never thought of as self-existing —that He simply was, is, and will be. Congo thought says, " He is made by no other, no one beyond Him is." They arrive at the idea of the existence of a chief good spirit by the same reasoning as they come at the notion of a chief evil spirit. It is a negro chieftainship glorified.

Nzambi is almighty. *Nzambi ampungu* is the expression. It means the highest, the most God of all. The word *mpungu* is an absolute superlative. It means the " out and out," the " tiptop," the utmost, the supreme. A *mpungu* sharper is a sharper above every other sharper. A *mpungu* anything is the utmost that can be said about it. As a compound noun it stands for a superlative quality of the other extreme, e.g. *mpungu ngangu*, " an absolute fool." As an adjective it follows the noun, never precedes it. The word is of fetish fame. There is nothing outside the hypothetical capacity of *mpungu.* God is almighty in the same sense. Nothing is beyond His power. He is the good Spirit who answers to and offsets the opposite evil being who works the wilful things of rascals.

Again, *Nzambi* is Creator. There is a peculiar wasp they call God's transforming or creating wasp ; *mfingi a Nzambi ankitula.* It is so called because it is thought that instead of producing young in the ordinary way, it " creates " them. The head and thorax of the insect are joined to the body by a yellow pin-like waist, which is about half an inch in length. Natives imagine that this renders it impossible for the wasp to bear young or to lay eggs. It builds for itself a house of mud, layer upon layer, a cluster of cylin-

drical cells, perhaps four or five or more about the circumference of a lead pencil one and a half inches long. These cells are cemented together. When complete, the nest is about the size of a Victoria plum. In their final form the cells are exquisitely fine and extremely hard when dry. An egg is deposited in each cell, and, to feed the young when hatched, the mother wasp carries grubs, flies, small spiders, etc., which she pushes inside with the egg. When the cell is properly furnished with food she seals it up apparently hermetically. It is a remarkable piece of work. By and by, the native sees coming from this nest, not the spider or the grub he saw put in, but a wasp like the one he saw putting in the captive insects. That is creation on a small scale. Out of a worm is made a winged creature. That is God's transforming or creating wasp, because it does a Nzambi-like work.

Nzambi also made man. In common parlance man is God's man, *muntu a Nzambi*. He also endowed man with spiritual peculiarities and temperament. Ask a dour person why he is so contumacious. He replies, "God made me so." A merry man says that God made him facetious. They say that God also creates individual tastes, and soul qualities. It is put thus: *ntonda zole kavang' o Nzambi, ntondele nzolele wo, ntondele kizolele wo ko.* God made two likes: I like it and want it, I like it and don't want it. As we should put it, *Nzambi* not only makes a head; He puts a brain into it. He makes a casket and sets a jewel inside—the soul. He makes the heart, threading into it the dispositions as He forms it.

Not only is *Nzambi* a Creator, but He exercises some degree of control over and in that which He has made. He causes the ceaseless flow of the water brooks, for which the Congoized rendering of the idea is: *maza kaleki Nzambi, wantuma kendanga;* water never sleeps—God made it to be always flowing. He has not only made the leaves of the

trees, but He has put into them wonderful healing virtue of universal fame among them. God works in the leaves. *Nzambi mu makaya kesadilanga.* They are mental peaks shooting right up out of the abyss of their ordinary mentality until they reach the refreshing altitude of feasibility and reality. Whatever is mysterious or beyond the comprehension of man is a thing of God: *ma kia Nzambi.* An inedible fungus, the use of which is not understood, is spoken of as *wivwa wa Nzambi*, God's fungus. The wild, vast, tangled jungle, with its majesty and mystery is *titi kia Nzambi*, God's jungle. An established, unalterable law, such as *menga waland'e mianzi*, blood follows the course of the veins, is said to be written, *sonama*, by God. God is behind the word *sonama.* It means the natural, the inevitable, the fixed. To a person who has had exceeding good fortune it is said "The blessings were *destined* for you; your fortune is *sonekenwa*" (written, ordained). The Congo university of these ideas is deep down in a lowly soul with a strange and varied history.

God knows, *Nzambi ozeye*, is a phrase common among the people, even the most benighted of them. When they come to the limit of their own knowledge they say "God knows." When in a difficult situation wherein they are unjustly treated, or wrongfully mistrusted, they say "God knows my heart." The heart is the province of God. It is an attribute they ascribe to no other being. The knowledge of *Nzambi* is beyond that of all, for even the witch who can get right into the human soul cannot decipher the code of thoughts seething in it.

They recognize, further, that what cannot be helped or hindered, controlled, or interfered with comes from God. *Kiatuka ku zulu ke kiayakakananga ko*, what comes from heaven cannot be resisted. When they come to the end of their ability they say "Leave it to God," *mwana kalongwa, Nzambi unkwa kunlonga*, i.e. God will take in hand the

refractory child. It is the black man's version of "Man's extremity is God's opportunity."

God may not be a Deity to the Congolese, but He certainly is not a nonentity. He plays a part in the native scheme of things even though it be a minor part.

Nzambi is just and merciful. Witness is borne to this idea in a most remarkable way. When a witch is condemned to death the unfortunate victim, knowing his innocence, usually protests it vehemently. He will strenuously fight for his life. So convinced is he of his blamelessness that he is always ready to take the poison to "prove it." He believes with the rest that "God works in the leaves, etc." Unflinchingly he drinks the ordeal, ignorant of the fact that those who have condemned him have made up their minds to kill him. After he has taken the fatal cup, and when he knows that he cannot survive it he will raise his hands to the heavens and cry out, "God knows that I know not a leaf to kill a goat or a pig, much less a human being," *Nzambi otomene zaya vo kizeye lukaya ludia nkombo, ludia ngulu, ludia muntu ko.* He dies in the *confidence* that God's justice and mercy will override the prejudices and misjudgment of his murderers, and that He will accord to him not the lot of the witch (*ndoki*), but the lot of the guiltless (*mpemba*). This final appeal to God is fairly general even among the lowest tribes. It proves the share of the natives in an intuition which is practically universal. After bad men have done their worst God will, in the end, set things right. He will see that equity survives all iniquity. "Man is a speaker, God is the answerer," *O mvovi muntu, o nlandu a Nzambi ampungu dezo.* Whatever wrong a negro does God Himself will give the final count on it. Not a bad theology for heathens! It is a voice more like a voice on the Forth and the Thames than a voice on the Congo.

Further, *Nzambi* is good. "Rejoice, God never wrongs

MAKING POTS.

Women are the Potters of the village. They employ no wheel, the pots being moulded with the hands and by means of smooth round stones. The results are not very varied in shape, but are by no means wanting in grace, and are ornamented with simple designs.

one," *Vo yiv' okemba, o Nzambi kadianga dia ngani ko.* Nothing evil is ever attributed to *Nzambi.* Pain, disease, and death come from evil spirits, witches, and the devil, but never from God. He does not destroy life. He gives it. Destruction is the work of evil beings.

One of the most important events in the customs of the people is a funeral. Decomposition usually fixes the day. The occasion focuses the assembling of the clans. It is disrespectful not to attend. The body is, on the day of burial, set in the open, and the chief or principal mourner sits at its head. All who attend pay something in token of respect to the departed, and to assist in defraying the expenses of the feast. In making the presentation, the donor repeats the authorized formula, " *Ozevo ingeta, muna vutwil' o nkw' eto o ntoto i ngizidi. Se kizi nkatu ko i kiami eki,*" " Now, sir, that I have come to the burial of our friend, I have not come empty-handed. This is my contribution." To this speech there is only one reply, remarkable from the mouth of a heathen. " We thank you for what you have done, but,"—looking at the corpse fixedly and pointing at it scornfully, he adds, " We do not thank the *devil* for what *he has done.*" Death, the work of the devil—a promising starting-point for future eschatology. Whatever the origin, it is a great truth with roots that run deep down into the convictions of the best men in Christendom.

One day little Wete, the sweet three-year-old daughter of Dr. and Mrs. Jones, sat playing with her dolly which had a broken head, when a tiny, frail, African child came on to the piazza and sat with her. " Wete, who made your dolly?" ventured the wee dot from the jungle. " *Nzambi,*" promptly answered Wete. " No!" fired the little heathen, " *Nzambi* did not make your dolly, because God never makes dollies with broken heads." " Christian teaching," you say; not a bit of it—just virgin heathenism

bubbling out of a little heathen soul. Broken limbs, deformities, misfortunes, trouble and such never come from the Congo *Nzambi*. Damage by lightning is of *nzazi* demons. Destruction by floods is of *lukandu* spirits. Every crook, twist, infirmity in man, bird, beast, twig, or anything, is never of *Nzambi* but of *nkita* devils. *Nzambi* makes fingers and toes. *Nkita* twist them, break them, or turn them clubbed. It is simply the natal philosophy patent to the Congo mind.

Finally, *Nzambi* is kind. They say, "*Nkanu a nsukami Nzambi unkwa wo landa*," i.e. God looks after the case of the poor man. The idea is that a man is left helpless before those who persecute him, flay him, mete out to him the most flagrant injustice. Such a case God will not overlook. A beautiful idea—God the friend of the helpless. Does not David say, "He shall stand at the right hand of the poor to save him from those that condemn his soul"?

Nevertheless, the Congolese do not worship *Nzambi*. The fact is not strange from the native view-point. *Nzambi* does not "eat" their children, bewitch their relatives, inflict disease, pain, or death, therefore there is no need to worry about Him. He is good, therefore they need not fear Him. There is no need to placate Him, for He is never angry, or to propitiate Him, for He is never offended. He whose temper is always even, whose attitude is always favourable, whose disposition is never objectionable, and from whom no unwelcome design, eventuality, or experience ever issue may safely be left alone without consequent loss or gain.

There is not even a fetish dedicated to *Nzambi*, or any fetish made to represent Him. For every other spirit and for every other purpose there is one. Theoretically the people could not get on without them. They would be overrun and overcome by demons and their colleagues in no time. No Congolese is considered safe without a

fetish to protect him. He sets one about him at every danger-point. Imps would stab him in the back in a moment if he threw his fetishes away. "Ghosts" would get his soul in a "blink of the eyes" (*nlayisw' o meso*), if he had no charm to keep them off. Moreover, if he had no fetish to help him he would get no benefits from the "good dead" or from the fairies, any more than a man could cash a cheque at the Bank of England without a signature. But—wonder of wonders—there is no fetish either to flatter *Nzambi* or to combat Him, which is the biggest testimony perhaps to His goodness and reliability a Congo mind, unaided, is capable of.

Now we come to the second order of good spirits, and it is something like a step from the sublime to the ridiculous, but as the ridiculous may only be an inverted view of the sublime we take the step hopefully.

Fairies (*simbi*) are the nearest approach of the Ba-Congo to the angelic order. They are a distinct class of supernatural beings, harmless and beneficial. They are a kind of ministering spirits, for the most part amiable and kind. They can be severe to those who insult them, but their normal attitude to mankind is friendly.

The common notions concerning them are characteristically African. Their dwelling-places are in the rivers, streams, and water-brooks of the country. The fog which sometimes settles over the valleys, especially in the winter, is said to be the smoke from the fires kindled by the fairies to cook their victuals. The proverb says, "Where the smoke is there are the fairies." A whirlwind is a peri gyrating over the country in a frolicsome mood. A cyclone is the united fury of the fairies necessitated by the wilfulness of certain members of society who cannot be brought to reason except by drastic treatment, such as a cyclone. All animals belong to the fairies. Hunters pray to the "dead" for meat. Apparently the "dead" are agents

of the fairies who attend to the distribution of live stock to the people. The fairies are the real owners. The "dead" are supposed to be in a position of trust under the fairies, and therefore able to represent their living relatives and friends, to the end of supplying them with meat. The fairies will give according to the attitude of the hunters to them. When the sun shines on distant objects, such as stones in the hillside, opal, glass, flint, quartz, lakes, etc., their reflection is seen a long way off and is thought to be the clothes of the fairies hanging out to dry after washing.

Fairies punish those guilty of wronging them. A man away from home becomes ill and unconscious, he has been beaten by the fairies. A person takes cold by bathing in the river before the sun is up, the fairies have smitten him with influenza for bathing at the wrong time in the day. A few suspicious pimples after a bath are "proof" that he went into the water where the nixies were taking their dip. If he gets ill by leaving his house before cockcrow and going into the keen winds which usually blow at that time in the morning, it is because he has unwittingly intruded himself among the fairies at a time when they are *en fête* which is always held in the fine drizzle of the dawn.

Fairies insist upon being respected. What is more, the people persist in respecting them. Old men before they drink wine or water pour some on to the ground for the fairies. Native doctors and priests before a ritualistic meal toss portions on all sides to feed them. Children are forbidden to throw stones into the water for fear of injuring the eyes of the fairies. Boys and men will not fish in the deep side waters of the rivers, because tradition has it that the fairies habitually cook their fish in these still pools. The secret was accidentally discovered by a boy who, when playing one day at the river, put his hand into a fish hole, deep down in the bank under the water and pulled

out a " cooked catfish." He did not know what he had done, but when he got to the town there was great consternation among the old people who saw what he had done. He had stolen the dinner of the fairies.

Fairies can assume visible form or any form they choose. For spying purposes they turn themselves into grass up to twenty-eight feet high, and from an inch down to a sixteenth of an inch thick, or less. Sometimes they take human forms. The story is told of a fairy who took the form of an ugly old woman carrying a baby on her back. She went to a woman working in her farm and asked for a drink of water. The woman refused, for the fairy was so repulsive to look upon that she feared something fearful might come to her if she gave the old hag her water bottle. The fairy passed on. Soon she met a man carrying a calabash of wine. She begged him to give her a drink. Without hesitation the man handed to her the wine. After drinking, the fairy bathed her baby in the wine. The man made no objection. When she handed back the bottle she said, " For what you have done for a poor old woman the poor old woman will do as much and more for you." She told him to go and set his fish traps in the garden where they would be filled with fish. She then went off. The man set his traps as directed. The neighbours said he was mad. Almost as soon as he had laid the traps it began to rain. It rained as it had never rained before or since. The rivers overflowed. The country for many miles around was flooded, covering the allotments with fish. Only one man was ready for them ; the man who had befriended the fairy. The woman who had refused the drink to the fairy was caught in the floods. The waters rose rapidly to her knees. She was seized with a burning thirst and essayed to drink, but found she could not stoop. She stood unable to move. The waters rose higher and higher. Soon she was able to drink, but she was unable to stop drinking. She

was drowned: the reward of unfriendliness. When the waters had abated the traps were found to be full of eels, baghre, mud-fish, and whitebait: the reward of generosity. Fairies, then, are the best friends the Congolese have. They give animals to hunt, to kill, and to feast upon. They give beautiful children with fairy character, fairy ways, and other fairy things. They are, therefore, bent on pleasing them. The step from this conception to that of our "ministering spirits" can perhaps be made without strain or difficulty.

CHAPTER XXV

Fellowship with Good Spirits

WORSHIP is an essential element of religion, however crude. The lower the religion the lower is the mode of worship. The Congo native is at his best when at worship, though it may be where he is most radically wrong. He bows down not so much to "wood and stone" as to whims and sense which is a shade higher because it is more spiritual than material.

In Congo the worship of higher powers is a concomitant of fetishism. They do not worship nature or ancestors, though a certain amount of admiration is held for both. They do not worship the evil dead, for they are united in antagonism against them. Ghosts, witches, and the rest are classes of spirits which command nobody's respect. It is certain they do not reverence evil spirits. They fear them and seek to avoid them. But there are other spirits of whom they are not afraid, whom they approach, talk with, and towards whom they maintain a friendly attitude. Whoever they may be and of whatever nature they may be the "innocent dead" are among them. For this reason the statement that they do not worship ancestors ought perhaps to be somewhat modified. In any case it is not the ancestor worship of the Chinese. Still, their relation to the dead is in the same direction. The Congolese pray to the dead, praise the dead, and sacrifice to the dead. The souls of ancestors share the distinction with other good spirits which have an independent existence—fairies, for example.

It is, then, those beings who dispense pleasures, who are believed to bring a little peace into the lives of mortals harassed by beings of another sort, who can check and counter-check the moves of their enemies, who can counteract the ills of demons, who can fill their nets with fish and their traps with flesh, who can bless them with health, fill their homes with bright and happy children, make the crops grow in the gardens, and the many other blessings for which they hope and strive, that the Congolese revere and commune with. These spirits can help them, so they approach them. They can give gifts, so they ask for them. They love praise, so they eulogise them. They have likes and dislikes, so they set themselves to ascertain what they are in order to do the right thing towards them. Hence their fetishism, their common medium. In this worship we do not find the beauty of an English liturgy, or the elaboration of a Greek or Roman ritual, or the mystic solemnities of an Eastern mosque, but just the simple worship, praise, prayer and sacrifice of an extremely simple people. Praise, prayer, sacrifice, and communion are the principal elements in Congo worship.

In praise, they pay homage to the good spirits by cultivating flattering views concerning them, by approaching them in attitudes of submission, by maintaining a behaviour acceptable to them, and by extolling their virtues.

Their manner of approaching these spirits is the orthodox. Congolese kneel before them. Kneeling is the common attitude of respect among these people. They kneel three times in approaching a king. Before a chief they kneel until they have touched the temples three times with earth. In offering anything to a superior the giver kneels and proffers with two hands. In receiving a gift both hands are extended whilst the recipient remains on the knees. A distinction however is made before the spirits. The people continue kneeling until the completion of the ceremony. This

attitude is absolutely incumbent upon them when they are engaged in any spiritual rite. *Nkombo kafukama* is a fetish carved, as the name indicates, kneeling. It represents obeisance and gratitude. In this attitude a client always receives the fetish medicine from the priest. It marks the supplicant's submission. The law concerning it is that the *nkombo* which does not kneel is destroyed. In the *nambwa* rite not only does the priest kneel, but all the hunters kneel with him. In *nkita* the "*lambu*" is eaten whilst on the knees. The act is called *kunda*, i.e. worship. It is an attitude of veneration.

Thanksgiving is also an important element in Congo. They sing or chant the virtues of the spirits. The drum, the harp, the trumpet, all are used to accompany their songs and choruses. In these songs they tell the spirits they are their children, thank them for past benefits, and implore their continued favour. One of their most common panegyrics is a song to their most common fetish—chalk, that is to say, to the powers which are supposed to work by it. It is: "*O luvemba luampan' o moyo nga yavila*" ("O Chalk, giver of life, but for thee I should have been lost"). To conclude their praise and thanksgiving they clap their hands in unison, thus adding the Congo amen, which is an indispensable factor to their worship. A fetish ceremony nearly always includes music and dancing. Festivity accompanies their supplications. They chant their miseries like Hebrews, and dance their joys like children.

To make this fellowship effective, conduct must be consistent with it. Taboos must be kept. Behaviour must conform to the laws of the creed. The misbehaviour of one may affect the smooth working of the system for the family, or the clan, or even the nation. To put it in the Congo way, "One man becomes the curse of a hundred." A breach of law will nullify its benefits or prevent them altogether. For a girl it may mean sterility. For a mother

it may mean the death of her child, or of all her children. For a trader, bankruptcy. For a farmer, failure of his crops. For a family, disease. For a tribe, famine. For a hunter, loss of skill and consequent loss of reputation. Indeed, there is no knowing what the misfortune may be, though it is known that misfortune of some kind will certainly result from disrespect for the law.

The conditions which govern this fellowship are, if anything, more emphatic in the negatives than in the positives. The things which are forbidden are more often urged with greater insistence than the things which are permitted. Success in the chase demands finical distribution of the meat according to definite canons. As pertaining to food, certain varieties are forbidden, other varieties are prescribed. Some regulations even stipulate the manner of eating as well as the quantity to be eaten. Others state the place at which the meal is to be made, and also the vessel from which it is to be eaten. It must be done kneeling, standing, bending, lying on the back, or with the hands tied with withes at the back. Sometimes they masticate it for themselves, at other times it is masticated for them. Maybe they are required to bolt it in so many mouthfuls. It may be a pot of beans, a handful of peanuts, a cassava root, a compote of leaves, the neck of an animal, the gizzard of a fowl, and so on. It may have to be eaten from a pot, a stone, a log, the ground, or the head of a drum. The "thou shalt not" is more prominent than the "thou shalt." The predominant note is *submission.* Coarse as these customs are, they contain the roots, and nourish a certain amount of morality which vindicates what social and moral coherence the Congo people possess.

Since heathens are human, there is, of course, gross transgression. Paradise is not in the tropics. But the negro is not alone in his headstrong folly against decrees which exist for his own good. A black man will run the gauntlet

of consequences as readily as a white man, for some brief advantage or pleasure he may gain, or think he gains, by doing what he ought not to do against his best.

Moral lawlessness among the Ba-Congo has produced reformers among them, just as religious declensions have created them in Europe. "Carpet government" (the seat of a law official is on a native carpet) is the fruit of a Congo fetish (religious) reformation. It was an effort to revive and re-enforce the morality already known to the people, by aiming at the destruction of the system which had not only ceased to uphold it as it was understood by the best people, but which had in many ways contributed to its abasement, by introducing into it the most murderous fetishes and fetish principles imaginable—as the *kinyambi* and *kavwalandanda* innovations, for example. Men with these fetish inventions often raid and invade the placidity of fetish orthodoxy with the suddenness and the revolution of most novelties.

Still, the fact remains, that true fellowship in the Congo sense presupposes submission. A repetition of offence requires a repetition of atonement. They are the germs of better things.

Prayer is another important factor in Congo worship. As an old negress put it to us: "We pray to leaves, spirits, and the dead." That is the general attitude of the Congolese. Prayer is offered at certain seasons, or whenever occasion demands the special assistance of a fetish. The request may be any wish: e.g. the direction of a bullet to kill an enemy or a beast, the effectiveness or ineffectiveness of a poison or a drug, the death or recovery of a person, for wealth, food, favour, skill, or whatever one supposes one can get for the asking.

There is a special formula of prayer to the dead. The one to offer prayer first calls the attention of the "dead" by shaking a *nsazu* (*cassia fistula*), a pod containing beans

which, when dry, is used as a rattle. The spirits are addressed thus: "*Ampembi y' Amvumbi, toyo! nwafwa kia meso ke nwafwa kia matu ko. . . .*" ("Oh, innocent dead, hear us (*toyo* is a word used to call attention), you are blind but you are not deaf)." Then follow the requests as they occur to the priest. Sometimes a whole morning is taken up iterating their requests. The premise is that the dead can help the living, that they can hear prayer, that they have the means and the disposition to grant their petitions.

They also pray to the spirits represented by their fetishes. They are requests of the simplest sort. They ask for good harvests, health, protection, and favours of a similar kind. With the *banda-banda* they implore the spirits to keep off the eagle. With the *nzazi* a request for revenge is notable. "Oh, thou *nzazi*, listen, whoever has done this (an offence) unless they desist, skin them as thou dost bark the tree." It is a request of the greatest severity we have found among them. It reminds us of Penelope's prayer for vengeance: "If Jove receive my prayer, not one survives to breathe to-morrow." The *mbola* priest prays with much self-abasement. The *solé* is prayed to for large families. The address begins: "Oh, city god of the citizen, wherever the citizen builds there thou dost build. I swear and bind thee to listen to me. . . ." Then follow the requests, among which, that for many healthy children predominates. The three principal members of the *ndembo* society are taught a prayer. The chief priest appoints a special teacher whose name is *nlombolodi*—the persistent beggar. The priest also prescribes the prayer which is as follows:

"Oh, living mystery, oh, *nkita* of destruction, shells which never turn their faces upward. Oh, priests, where is the remedy? I was in trouble (in the bag of *ndundu* and *mbaka*). Seize upon all outsiders. I do not eat yet I do not become thin, because I trust *mvemba* and *nlaza* (names of the fetish). Oh, *nlaza*, do not cripple me. I am thy

child with the freedom of the family (*diavulunga, diavulunga*); innocent and with nothing to confess. Since you would destroy me you destroy your own little animal. Would you collect guns, would you collect stubble? (to kill and burn me). I am the maker of the lodge (*masamba*), oh, *ndembo*. I am *ndundu* the wrestler. I am *mvemba* of *ndundu* who gives birth to monsters. You are *mfuma* (hollow in trees) where pigs die, where goats die as peace offerings, where the pig is the coverer of secrets (sins), where fowls are as plentiful as their feathers (offerings). Oh, *nkumbu* and *ngazi!* Oh, *lubongo lua ngazi!* Though your chair become small as if dead we will sit on it a hundred times with blessings. I shall not sleep hungry in *trusting mvemba* and *nlaza*. Here I conclude. Let *nkita* be exalted. Alas, alas, *ndundu* and *mbaka*. It is I *mvemba*. I have finished with a hundred endings with blessings."

Both the psychology and the phraseology are the province of experts. The prayer does not gain in translation. We possess it in the original from one who has taught it all his adult life.

Each supplicant repeats the prayer kneeling with hands behind the back until they have learnt it by heart. The occasion and purport of the prayer is this. The three mentioned have suffered, or are suffering, some misfortune which necessitates *ndembo* being opened for their benefit. They are guilty before *nkita*. To remove the guilt and the misfortune they appeal to *nkita*. The first thing is to kill a goat—the peace-offering, the guilt-bearer, *nkombo a maboko*. After this they are entitled to plead their innocence. They implore *nkita* to stay their (*nkita* is plural) anger. They have already suffered. Is it not enough? Is it the will of *nkita* to destroy them outright? *Mvemba* and *nlaza* are rich, powerful, abounding in blessings. Why not compel all without, to come in to trust so mighty a union in whom reposes a "hundredfold blessing"?

The fact that Congo prayer is to the spirit of an ancestor, or to a higher spirit, approached by blood, gunpowder, and such-like, for nothing better than a gift of skill, physical remedy, or some such temporal favour, does not destroy the moral quality at the foundation of it, from which it springs and upon which it thrives.

Sacrifice is a common practice among the Ba-Congo. It is of offerings of various kinds—pudding, roots, nuts, wine, and so forth. It must, however small, be the best of the farm, the chase, the rivers, or of their culinary art. If liquid, a little is poured on to the ground. If food, portions are thrown to the four quarters. It is of the essence of these gifts that the spirits partake. The communicants take the rest. In so doing a communion is formed between the seen and the unseen. The division of the offering recalls the sacrifice of Eumæus made in honour of the visit of Ulysses :—

> Now from the herd the best
> Select in honour of our foreign guest,
> In seven just portions,
> The king the chine. . . .

The shedding of blood constitutes a sacrifice (*kimenga*) in the true sense of the term. It is an act of substitution, an act of propitiation, and an act of communion. "There is no satisfaction to a fetish spirit except in the shedding of blood." That is the statement of a native who knows more about the psychology of Ba-Congo fetishism than most. Sacrifice presupposes guilt. Illness, or whatever misfortune it may be which occasions a fetish ceremony, is regarded as the "proof" as well as a penalty of the offence. A sacrifice is made to take away guilt. It is literally offered in place of the guilty. It is to save the life of the person in danger that the goat, the pig, or the fowl is killed. The blood is the propitiation. It is dripped on

the fetishes, smeared on everything of importance used in the ceremony, and put on the lips, temples, and forehead of the principal party as the symbol of mediation. The priest cannot act without blood. In matters of offence and reconciliation, guilt and absolution, life and death, sacrifice is indispensable.

The sacrifice, too, is an act of communion, not only of man with spirit, but of man with man. After the blood has been shed, the flesh of the sacrifice is consumed by the supplicants when the spirits have presumably consumed the immaterial part of it. Of the wine the spirits take the savour, the people take the drink. The whole party—family, town, or clan—takes part in this communion. It is not a meal in the ordinary sense. The quantity would not suffice for all. There is a distinct share for the priest. The rest is for the general company. Sometimes it opens the ceremony, but more often it concludes it. At other times it both initiates it and terminates it. It is a religious act which assumes that the intercession has succeeded, concluded in much eating, drinking, and merry-making.

In his demonology the negro is undoubtedly in touch with hell, but a close study of his psychology reveals some striking moral life-lines which have been thrown from somewhere, by someone, and which may help him into the security from whence they appear to have been cast.

CHAPTER XXVI

Death & After Death

THE Congolese soul is a queer thing, but still, it is a soul. At times it is capable of great things, but generally it is occupied at the other extreme. The negro's brain chokes it with wild-cat schemes and scares it almost to death with awful hallucinations. The atmosphere about it is always hazy in which a stranger soon senses the antique and eerie. Even before the native has become conscious of his soul he has surcharged it with a tremendous power of curious things. It is already a well-furnished apartment when he begins to make intelligent use of it.

The Ba-Congo have pronounced views on the origin of the soul. They give no place to traducianism. "The child is born, the soul is not born," is their way of putting it. *Mwana unkwa wutwa o mwand' a mwana kawutwanga ko.* The soul has the function of consciousness alike in all but the expression of it varies according to the physical fitness of the medium through which it operates. The difference between an idiot and a wise man is not in soul, but in the vehicle by which it manifests itself.

The soul can leave the body as completely as did the hero of *A Princess of Mars.* It can operate independently of it and return to it at will. It is the explanation of a dream. The soul slips out of the body and talks, sees, hears, travels, and capers entirely on its own account. When out of the body, which it leaves snug under the blanket, it knows neither time nor space. It hunts in distant jungles, inter-

views dead acquaintances, enjoys the most delightful excursions, performs sensational feats, and gets back to its old clay tenement before the cocks begin to crow in the morning. What better evidence of the existence of the soul does a negro want than that? He has known his own soul stand and look at its own habitat lying as though stark dead on its sleeping-mat before it has got into it in time to rouse it up at the break of day. He has even dreamt of his own funeral when his soul has played him the trick of pretending to lead him off to the burial ground. Whilst *nitu* (body) sleeps, *mwanda* (soul) enjoys itself.

The *mwanda* is distinct from the ordinary "spirit," or spiritual principle which animism recognizes in other things animate and inanimate. A beast has life (*moyo*), but it has no *mwanda*. That is why a dead dog requires no funeral, because it has no *mwanda* to witness the homage or to appreciate it, or, which is more to the Congo point, no spirit to take revenge if burial honours are not accorded to it. The soul of the Congolese is more than the "soul stuff" of, say, a bale of rubber, even after being tapped, boiled, treated with acid, and on its way to Europe.

Animism invests the cargo with a "soul," something valuable enough to cause the natives to covet it. Thieves and demons watch it with reputed avidity. It is the quality which makes the thing of good market value. They steal it from one load and add it to another without making any difference in the appearance of the rubber. Unless the owner sees the thief in the act he never knows that anything has been stolen. The benefits of the robbery exist only in the consciousness of the one who has convinced himself that he has pilfered them, or anyone else who imagines the deed to have been done. The proprietor puts the "almighty" fetish inside the load, charged with charm-shot as a bomb is charged with powder, in order to protect

it—not the rubber, they will not steal that—but the unembodied part of it.

The same idea will cause a native to drive his knife through a palm frond which tears a hole in his cloth or his flesh, or to fire a charge of iron-stone into a stump of wood which has barked his shin, so that he may get at the demon which has got into the "soul" of these things for the very purpose of ruining the cloth, limbs, and shins of black men. That is common animism. The soul of the negro, in its self-consciousness, is on a much higher plane.

The native theory of the human soul has endowed it with another striking peculiarity also. It not only quits its own body when it likes, but other beings can extract it from him if they like. We have already noticed that this is the special crime of witches. White men are believed to do the same thing to Africans, both in a spiritual and a mechanical way, too. The poor mortals have mental visions of cabin trunks, portmanteaux, medicine chests, lobster tins, oil cans, etc., packed with the captive spirits of their fellows ready for deportation to foreign shores. We have seen them peeping into the operating theatre and slink off in terror of the idea that it is a place where strange medicine men put people to sleep and take out the soul before they recover their senses again.

The mechanical way is with a photographic camera. Upon the appearance of the "soul-box" the natives will fly for their life, helter-skelter, in all directions. The click of the shutter stands for the instantaneous extraction of the soul. This soul the white man exhibits in the form of a photograph, generations after the subject of it has been buried. When old chief Mankunku was photographed with us, his people told him we had got his soul, and that consequently he would soon die. To our astonishment he did die, and we were credited with his death. His successor refused point-blank to "put his hand in the bag," as they

say, to be "caught napping," as we say. The escape he thought his soul had had made him ill for a long time, and nearly killed him. It is an old trick of white men, for popular native thought says, that out of the souls thus collected the wealth of the upper nations has been manufactured.

Death is the cessation of *nitu* (body), but not of *mwanda* (soul). That is bed-rock Congo theology. The whole realm of fetishism from its alpha to its omega is one unbroken attestation to the continuity of the soul out of the body. That it lives on somewhere, somehow, is believed by all. This is the idea which leads them to prepare for their own funeral. They get enough shroud of cotton and velvet to make the corpse as stubby and as bulky as the body of a baobab tree, stocks of barter goods to ensure the pigs and the wine for the feast of the mourners, things to pay the bandsmen, and "money" to buy the gunpowder which will honour the living soul of the departed on the day of the burial.

Some affirm that the soul remains in the body until after the funeral to see to it that it gets no less attention than the best ritual provides for it. At one funeral we witnessed, so we were told, a soul insisted on its rights in this direction, by refusing to let its body be taken to the grave until due honours had been paid. As the pall-bearers, about fifteen of them, took up the body, it struggled with them, and "refused to go" until someone paid forfeit. This struggle took place repeatedly before they got the body to the grave. Each time the "soul" stopped them a payment had to be made to a mourner, which seemed to have a quietening effect upon the troubled spirit, not only of the deceased, but of the cortège as well. Their version was that the soul would not consent to the burial of its body until everything becoming its dignity had been done. This is why there is always great shouting, dancing, feasting,

and hilarity at the obsequies of Congolese. It is befitting to the passing of great souls.

There is another notion, that the spirit makes the buried body its permanent abode. For the sake of this idea a dish of food may be placed on the grave, or in some place of easy access, perhaps in the home of a relative. Some have even left an open way down to the head of the body to conduct wine and other things to the spirit below. But there is no end to Congo imagery concerning the movements of the soul after death.

The future world of Congo souls is strictly divided into two divisions—a place for good souls and a place for evil souls. The most heathen of them never put them together after death. Good souls are called *ampemba ye mvumbi*, innocent dead, i.e. *yakondw' a kuma*, without fault. The spiritual abode of these beings is believed to be a happy one. It is just here that we meet another remarkable idea couched in another wonderful phrase. When a good, amiable, popular person has just passed away they say "*Wele kuna nkembo, nkinu, yo nkiya*," he has gone to glory, dancing, and travel—three of the most precious things within the range of a negro's hope.

Glory is a word which sounds more Puritan than pagan. But there it is. To find that it stands for a part of the heathen's paradise is scarcely expected. It is a place of ideal festivity with no witch to detract from its pure enjoyments. There is no house-building, no ninety-five pound loads to transport, no demons to get into the heart, and no chigoes to get into the feet. There is no worry about cloth or harvests or any of those things common to the ordinary life of black men, and wherein lie all manner of efforts to make the union of body and soul a sufferable existence.

Dancing is the negro's principal joy and recreation. It is just the very thing which calls the people from far

and near and which holds them in its grip for days and weeks together. The dance is the prime thing in African life. We have known them to dance themselves to death. When the moon is full and the air is full of night-sounds, when every object throws a sharply defined shadow away from the light and the cool breezes rush over the surface of the earth where its heat has made a passage, the natives will dance wildly, madly, deliriously, until not a ray of light is left above the horizon. They will then continue by the light of a grass fire until nature absolutely refuses to go further without rest and sleep. Where they can dance at will without interruption is " paradise "—just one eternal ballroom, the soul state just one eternal ball.

Travel is the negro's second nature. His hereafter is a place where there is no flesh to clog the movements. The soul can go on and on whithersoever it will, impeded neither by sundown nor sunrise. When souls are passing over, those who remain send greetings to those who have gone before. *Samuna mavimpi kwa tata*, tell our health to father, is the Congo equivalent of our " Give father our best wishes." Such is the negro's elysium, an El Dorado to which all of them look forward with undying hope. There is, naturally, much merriment, music, and mania in sending a soul off to such a delightful destiny.

CHAPTER XXVII

Incidents & Incidentals

AFRICA offers a field to intellect of every calibre: to a Roosevelt, sport; to a Darwin, science; to a Roberts, empires; to a Lever, trade; to a Colenso, theology; to a Lacerda, travel. Be he soldier, hunter, trader, author, clergyman, or tripper, Africa opens to him a world in which he may reign. He will know more about that world than about any other. The one who is likely to know something about them all is he who lives out a lifetime roaming at will over all the spheres. He is the man who sends the most curios to the museums, and the most plants to the gardens. He opens up the trade routes into the countries, as well as avenues into the life and lore of their peoples. He knows where the animals browse, where the river is forded, where the valuable minerals are, and where the natives worship. To him the life of Europe has lost its charms, for he has given himself to the wilds of heathendom.

What a world of interest there is in the multiform life in the tropics. There is not a dull day for one who has an active mind. Anything in size from an elephant to a sand flea, anything in species from a lion to a gnat, anything in speed from an eland to a chameleon, anything in reptiles from a crocodile to a frog, may be found about the equator, so that no brain need flag for the want of exercise.

One of the first intimacies a traveller in Africa acquires is with the mosquito. There are many other insectile things which bite, but this pest attacks him as soon as he

lands, fights him as long as he remains, and only ceases to draw off his blood when he has entirely quitted its domain.

It is astonishing what feats these nocturnal creatures are capable of doing. They push an almost invisible proboscis through every layer of jacket, vest, and shirt, piercing an alarming way into the flesh, with a force that would do credit to the forty-thousand muscled trunk of an elephant, comparatively considered. The skill by which they get on the inner side of a net of small mesh is mystifying. They push their way in with great determination and stab you in every possible quarter, after you have satisfied yourself that every corner is tucked in and every hole stitched up. The way they attack suggests some sort of collusion. They are the most bloodthirsty, voracious little beasts imaginable. You can watch them probing into a muscle right up to the limit of their trunks and can actually observe the place where they are storing your blood getting larger and larger until as though ready to burst. The depth to which they bury their tubes in the flesh and the length of time they keep them in suggests that, like the larva, they breathe through their tails. When overfed, they are comparatively easy to kill; an act which always leaves a splash of purple where they had the nose in.

That public sentiment is dead set against the mosquito is only natural. Blood-sucking is not its worst injury. It is responsible for charging the human body with the germs of malaria which, unchecked, multiply so as to choke the blood-vessels. We have seen tremendous battles between this disease and medical skill, extending over weeks, each suffering alternate defeat. Cold packs and baths, three or four or more in a night, with a temperature running up and down between 100 and 107 degrees, are experiences which irresistibly promote a bitter and universal antagonism to mosquitoes.

The tsetse fly is worse. Its bite is more painful. It raids the animal tribe at noon when the blood is thinnest. The damage is more grievous both to behold and to suffer. It makes a bigger wound than the mosquito, draws off more blood, and gives in exchange a tedious, loathsome, lingering death. It deposits living organisms in the veins and glands which can be seen under the microscope squirming about the disc like a family of reptiles. They squirm through the blood-vessels the same way, making their victims squirm with them.

There is no more pitiable sight in all Africa than a warrior smitten with sleeping sickness. The strongest physique is quickly wrecked. We have seen strong men weep when they have been told of their disease. They receive the news of their infection as the sentence of death. The repetition of slight indispositions soon arouses suspicion of the disease and a native is seldom deceived in his diagnosis of it. The eyes are heavy and misty, the face shines as if polished, the limbs refuse obedience to the will until finally the will surrenders to the inevitable. The end is then certain, but not rapid. With increasing lassitude the body becomes flabby and tender. The victims will then sleep at any time and in any place. It wrings the heart to see them lie down in the roadway, or squat in a corner, or stretch themselves along the veranda to sleep the living sleep of death. Finete, a lad with the sweetest negro face we have seen, would sleep standing at our chair during dinner. The boy is now sleeping his last sleep. He was too choice a bloom even for the tropics, blighted before he had seen many moons. Towards the end, the afflicted become emaciated, and very often idiots. The time comes when they close their eyes in sleep until the heart ceases to beat—done to death by a sort of gadfly.

Medical science has declared war to the bitter end on both insect and disease. Gradually it is overcoming the malady.

The treatment is drastic, but drastic ailments require drastic remedies. Unless carefully watched the cure may be worse than the affliction. Blindness is the risk, but seldom the result, because the first sign of it would arrest the treatment. Six months divided between intermuscular and interveinous injections are a torture to the flesh, but we have seen them helpless with grief when it has been impossible to get the vein to take the needle, or when something has necessitated the passing over of the operation.

We have known good cases of recovery, too. Dr. E. R. Jones has registered some remarkable successes. The disease particularly interferes with generation, which, in native estimation, is a veritable calamity. But we have seen healthy children born of parents who had been victims of the illness for years. It is a proof that the disease in some cases has been mastered. Reinoculation may occur, but that is another matter.

The medical world has yet to cope with it in anything like adequate form. Upon it devolves not only the necessity but the honour of bestowing upon the Africans the final solution to their most fatal disorder, and to solve the problem of their most distressing medical need.

Another irascible creature is the driver ant, although it will not attack unless interfered with. The manners of these ants are highly curious. They travel in myriads. We have seen them passing a spot three inches abreast for more than a week without ceasing. They send out scouts to select the way and their choice is the line of march for the whole tribe. In all exposed places, such as a foot-path or a market-place, soldiers are lined upon both sides of the route facing the moving column. Whilst the young ants or females carrying their eggs are passing they form an arch over them with their antennæ, as an extra protection. At short intervals stands a guard facing outwards

with its nose high as if sniffing danger. If you tap the ground lightly in its vicinity it will at once dart in the direction of the sound and sweep round in search of the cause. When it discovers an enemy it fastens on to it with the most tenacious grip. When they attack *en masse* they will kill a beast or a reptile. The story is preserved in folklore of them destroying a huge python. When hunting, they choose the night. The way they select a hunting-ground is mysterious. They march to a spot as if by prearrangement. They then spread out over a wide area, leaving not a spot on which to place the sole of the foot. When they invade the houses for cockroaches, etc., there is no other course but to vacate them until they have finished. No being, animal or human, is content to stay in their course. They attack fowls, biting the feet and legs until they bleed to death. To step into a swarm invites a fearful attack upon the body from which they can only be removed one by one, by stripping to the skin. Every ant seems to make its caliper-shaped fangs meet in the flesh, from which nothing but death can cause it to leave its hold. So firm is its grip that in detaching it, its head is pulled clean off, and remains in the flesh. Whilst they are tenants the people are either homeless or refugees.

There is another ant which the traveller will notice in the dry, sandy spaces of the plains. It is the ant-lion. Dotted about the surface of the ground are seen small conical pits, at the bottom of which the ant-lion lies concealed, except its jaws, waiting for its prey. These pits are the intelligent device of the ants to trap other insects. The ant throws the soil up with its jaws until the sides are composed of loose grains from top to bottom all round. When an unsuspecting victim comes on to the edge of the pit the sand gives way, taking the little struggling victim with it. It can never mount the sides again, for if it tries to escape

the ant-lion brings it down with an avalanche of quicksand. At the bottom a great fight takes place. The ant-lion seizes it, shakes it like a terrier shakes a rat, beats it against the ground as a throstle does a snail and finally smothers it under the sand at the bottom of its den, where it sucks that which it likes from the carcass.

The most destructive insects are the workers of the termites. We lost our best pair of window curtains in a single night, nothing of them being left next morning. The sense by which they discover food in their blindness must be of the finest cast. In the forest they may be seen building the tunnel under which they always travel and labour, making straight for the dead branch at the top of the tree. A particularly tasty rafter in a roof is apparently well scented judging by the way they make for it direct from underground, with unerring precision. The workers are always as busy as bees. They construct hives which may be from three to twenty feet high, and from one to fifty feet in circumference, whilst underground the galleries sometimes extend over a wide area, from which enough good clay can be dug to build a town of decent size. At the beginning of the rainy season the pupæ develop heavy wings, too clumsy to be of much service. They help them a few hundred yards and are shed almost as soon as they land. The busy termites then capture a pair and imprison them in a cell where they form the nucleus of another swarm. Their captors work for them, hunt their food, and make their shelter. The king termite never lives long. The queen produces eggs at an enormous rate. They have fighting men just like the driver ants. The little beings have a most extraordinary digestive apparatus, and a range of appetite of amazing dimensions. They will devour paper, cloth, wood, grass, straw, leather, cork, rubber, and many other kinds of material with a never-ending voracity. The natives are fond of the pupæ as food.

They capture them in large quantities at the swarming season by squatting over the holes in the ground from which the insects emerge. Cooked or uncooked, they eat them, head, legs, wings and all, with great relish.

The mole-cricket is another delicacy to the native taste. Attracted by its cry, parties may be seen at eventide digging the curious insect out of its chambers deep down in the ground.

One evening we were specially interested in a magnificent specimen of the leaf-insect (*phyllium*) settling on the leaves among the flowers which stood in the centre of the dining table. Even the antennæ and legs represented small leaves, grained and veined like the perfect article. The wings and body from tip to tip were ribbed and coloured to the very last details of mimicry. As if quite conscious that its deception could not be penetrated, it submitted to being touched without being alarmed. We had met with one striking case of mimicry before, beside the praying mantis, whilst sitting in a town near a forest. It was a "walking-stick" insect (*phasmidæ*) which settled on a log at our feet like a chip of dry, brown twig. It was no thicker than a wheat straw and was the same circumference from head to tail, both ends being round and blunt as if cut square with a saw. Once since, as our carriers were manœuvring the hammock round the butt of a tree, we noticed a little bit of green moving on the trunk. On examining it closely we found it to be an insect like a small tuft of moss, exactly the colour of the tree it moved on. When stationary, it appeared to be a little wart such as grows on trees.

There is an insect of the caterpillar variety which protects itself like the larva of the caddis-fly, though with sticks and cloth instead of shells and stones. It spins a very strong silk enough to cover itself, weaving into it and all round it lengths of stick about an inch and of an eighth of an inch thick. The construction forms a very effective

armament. When it goes in it pulls after it a little silken door, which secures warmth and protection. The little house is hung on the branch of a tree full of the leaves it feeds on. When it has stripped the branch it carries and hangs its dwelling on a new bough.

The most solemn thing we have seen in Africa, which goes on four legs, is the chameleon. It is extremely ugly. Its movements are preposterously slow and serious. It makes no attempt to escape, even if you roll it over, pick it up, or strike it. Its toes resemble and operate like a forefinger and thumb. We were disappointed in its supposed capacity to change its colour, having observed, under many tests, nothing more than that from a green to a grey. The eyes are the greatest peculiarity of the reptile. They stand high in the head and well out, too, enabling it to see objects at every angle without moving. The movements of the eyes are quite independent of each other, empowering it to concentrate one ahead and one to the rear at the same moment. Natives dread the creature for some superstitious reason and will violently take its life on every opportunity.

Reptiles are reputed to possess a good measure of wisdom. They are also capable of a good measure of foolishness. One of the foolish tried to get through the mesh of a wire-netting without first taking the size of itself. A Congo proverb says that "A very little bird should always take the size of its gullet before it tries to swallow a palm kernel." When the snake had got part of its body through it became fixed. Turning round to get back, it came through the next mesh. It repeated this effort until it had laced itself up to the neck. Thus it perished in the heat of a blazing sun. Another serpent entered a pen and swallowed a kid, which rendered it unable to get out the way it got in. Its next encounter was with a shotgun. One dark evening we stood talking to our head-man at the gable end of his

house. Suddenly at our back there fell something with the sound of a falling rope. It was a huge snake which had broken its back in the fall. With a light we found it had struck at a rat along the ridge-pole, and, miscalculating its speed, or the distance, had overshot the gable. It got the rat, but with a broken spine it was easily despatched by the aid of a stout stick.

On the way from Mbamba to Kongo we watched two jackals hunting an antelope. It was an exciting chase. We stood on a ridge commanding the view of a long, shallow valley, which eventually lost itself in the slope of a hill on the opposite side. The quarry, intent on watching its pursuers, ran clean up to our caravan, then turned off with increased alarm to the east. The two jackals were well on the scent, but were miserably outpaced. Maybe they would track the deer down, for they rounded the swamp in full cry where it had disappeared.

This country is overrun with jackals and pigs. The former are sometimes heard pattering on the veranda of the house at night. They prowl about, barking incessantly, disturbing the peace of slumber. Pigs are of two sorts—bush pigs and town pigs. The latter are a very unpleasant breed. They feed foul, and their ears, legs, snouts, and buttocks are usually full of chigoes.

The African antelopes are things of beauty and grace. There is no more charming sight than to watch a doe just as the sun is going down, skipping about in the valley with its fawn, quite unconscious of danger. The sounds at 5 a.m., just as one is turning out of bed in the open, are equally pleasant when these lithe beings greet each other on the feeding ground. Three of the finest beasts of the species, fleeing from a prairie fire, raced straight through our town. Two cleared the high wire fence, but the third ran blindly into it. In its fright it became confused and stupid. A woman, seeing the plight of the animal, ran and

took hold of its hind leg, which she held on to despite the most violent jolts as the terrified animal kicked out. A workman soon came to her assistance, putting his arms round the neck of the antelope to keep its head low. With other aid soon to hand they threw it to the ground, secured its legs and made sure of a "meat supper" that night before they went to bed. Sometimes they trap this sort of game by sprinkling a little salt on the ground, round which pegs are driven to hold down a noose. A long, supple pole is brought from the forest, which they fix in the ground, tying to the other end the cord with the slip-knot. It is then bent over and secured to the pegs round the salt, but so delicately that the slightest touch of the spring with the tongue slips the noose round the animal's neck and strangles it.

The buffalo is one of the worst beasts to hunt or to encounter, especially when it has been turned out of the herd for bovine disgrace or bovine incapacity. We have seen them in various moods. A friend of ours was charged by an infuriated brute into which he put seven bullets at point-blank range. It only fell at his feet with the seventh round. There is a notion that buffaloes are responsible for spreading sleeping sickness. A Portuguese medical commission is out to investigate it. So far there is no confirmation of it.

The leopard is a terror. Its bite induces a kind of green sickness in which a man vomits himself to death. The people are not afraid to hunt it in force. It is a royal beast, as swans in England are royal birds. To kill a leopard is a feat of the highest quality. We remember a night in the *nkanda* hills when two monsters raided the cattle. The whole town got up noisily out of its sleep and lighted fires to drive them off. The leopards left one goat lacerated and bleeding where they had felled it, but of which they were cheated by the hubbub. The skin of a leopard is the sign

of royalty, because in that quarter the leopard is the king of beasts.

Whether it be in the realm of natural history, anthropology, religion, botany, geology, commerce, politics, or any other branch of knowledge embraced by an amalgamation of nations and the places of their abode, Africa yields an ample scope to every patron.

CHAPTER XXVIII

Negroisms

ON DIT :—A man with a nervous twitching of the eyelids is an expert hunter. One who bites his tongue whilst eating is being scandalized. A child that cries in its sleep will become a widow or a widower soon after the wedding. A person who plants a *kola* tree or a *nsafu* tree cannot live long. Sickness accompanies a waning moon. A new moon takes away disease. When a baby laughs in its sleep it is dreaming of the death of its mother; when it cries in its sleep it is dreaming of the death of its father. If a fowl in flight settles on any part of a human body that individual will become an expert game trapper. To beat one with *diadia* grass is to give a disease similar to progressive atrophy. The rainbow is caused by the reflection of the sun on the back of a snake called *ngongolo*. If saliva leaves a man's mouth accidentally it is a sign that he is being well spoken of. When a man's heart "flutters" other people are talking about him. When the house of circumcision is burnt, the priest who is secured inside is miraculously saved from burning by his fetishes. To bath a child in water in which the shells of some palm nuts have been put, will ensure for it great physical strength in its maturity. To make sure of catching palm rats daily, the first one caught must be picked up by the tail and not by the head. Should a man carry a bone or part of a bone of a boa-constrictor about his person, he will come to his death by drowning the first time he enters water. When the palm of the hand itches it signifies the

coming of great luck. A man sitting in the house with a bee buzzing round him knows that a stranger is coming. A ticking spider under a bed on which one is trying to sleep is a sure sign of death. A hawk hovering over a garden is robbing the garden of its "soul." Hawks flying round and round a town are harbingers of good things to that town. Storm clouds can be prevented striking any town, or house, if the inhabitants tie leaves (*lembalemba*, and *ntontozi*) about it and break a cooking-pot in the public square. If a milliped gets on the body, something terrible is bound to happen. If, when a storm is threatening, a person says, "My word, there's a storm coming," he risks a fearful calamity. The only thing that can save him from it is for him to say quickly, "I didn't mean a rain storm, I mean a hail storm." Should one carrying a baby say, "It is heavy," he foretells the child's death. No body but a corpse is "heavy." A child is always spoken of as being "light." To say that one's hands or feet are tired when nursing a baby is equivalent to wishing the child dead. The proper thing to say when tired is, "I am hungry (anxious) to go on nursing." If two children unable to walk are together their feet must not be allowed to touch each other, because the one more backward will retard the progress of the other. A *kinswa* fetish can turn a dead rat, killed by an arrow, into a lizard, tall bush grass into snakes, or even cause a dead rat to come off the arrow of the one who killed it on to the arrow of the one who covets it. When a hen crows it betokens the death of the owner or of some other member of the family. A member of the human race once accidentally discovered "dog town," where he suffered dire distress on account of the fact that the canine authorities fed him on bones. When he returned to mankind he started a campaign against dogs. One of the first acts of retaliation upon which all mortals were agreed was to serve dogs as they had served man.

Whatever may be the fortune or misfortune of individual dogs since, let a man's meal be what it may, fowl, pig, beef, buffalo, venison, rat, elephant, fish, etc., dogs get nothing but bones.

The human ear is inhabited by a little being called the mother of the ear, *ngudi a kutu*. Sometimes she is heard singing, sometimes whistling. Sometimes she rings bells in the ears and makes other noises. When a fly or other insect gets in there is great commotion. The buzzing is when the little mother sets up a strenuous fight to eject the foreign intruder.

There is also a little being resident in the human eye. It is called the " child of the eye." This little person keeps a look-out for things going on in the world and reports everything that comes within ken to the people who dwell in the head. The little individual can be distinctly seen whenever one cares to look into the eyes of another. The pain in the eye when a bit of grit or anything gets into it, is caused by the efforts of this diminutive creature to turn it out. Were the ears and eyes not provided with these caretakers they would soon cease to be of any use to the head which grows them.

The word for beard is the result of an accident. Formerly it was called " hair round the mouth." One day a little boy just beginning to talk, asked his father what it was. The father, in no mood for talking, was annoyed at the inquisitiveness of his son, so he said sharply, " *Nze vo*," which is equivalent to " How do I know? " The child said, " *Nzevo?* " " Yes," snapped the father. That is why a man's beard is called *nzevo*.

To cure a town of a pest of slugs and snails all the people of the town—men and women, young and old—must dance in the streets one whole night. At early dawn a big hole must be dug in the main thoroughfare large enough to allow a person to jump in and out conveniently and deep

enough to cover the head when standing on the bottom. The hole is then filled with water. When all is ready, every one in turn, male and female, boy and girl, must jump down into the hole and jump out again as quickly as possible. If this is done neatly and with despatch, all slugs and snails within the vicinity will take their departure *en masse*.

"Prevention is better than cure," or, as the Congolese say, "It is best to bind up the finger before it is cut." That is why the tapster, when he climbed the palm tree, left his bones at the bottom and took only his skin with him to the top. If he fell he could not break them. The best way to prevent being tripped up is to turn the heels foremost when going through forests. The story is told of a man who had a particular dread of crocodiles. He would never cross a river until he had made sure that he had the crocodile at his mercy. "The best way," he would say, "to keep the crocodile from getting you is for you to get the crocodile." To this end he used to wait on the bank until the crocodile came up. He then caught it, put it on his shoulders, and carried it over the stream with him. When he got to the other side he put the crocodile back gently into the water. He argued that it is practically impossible for any saurian monster in such a position to drag a man under water, which it certainly would do if the man took no precaution.

A negro version of the "slip between the cup and the lip" is "First make sure of your meat before sharping the spit on which to cook it." A man caught an antelope. When he had skinned it he sat down beside it, and rubbed his hands gleefully, saying, "Ah, I have you this time. I'll bet my powder bag I don't sleep hungry to-night." "Oh," said the antelope, "that's it, is it? We'll see." The hunter was so astonished at hearing a skinned antelope speak to him in that way that he momentarily lost his self-

control. When he came to himself it was to see the antelope making off for the forest, leaving its skin in the hands of the more bewildered man. "Hi," shouted the hungry man after the fast disappearing antelope, "what's the good of going off without your skin? Everybody will laugh at an antelope without a skin." "Maybe," retorted the antelope with a grin, "but what will they say of the man who shot a skin without an antelope?"

MAP FOR "WILD BUSH TRIBES OF TROPICAL AFRICA"

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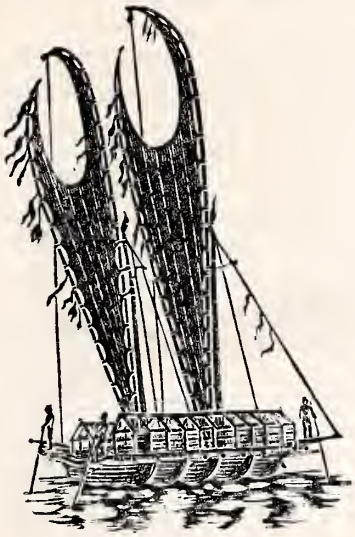

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